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Crossed Sabers

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"Telling the MND-Baghdad Story"

Monday, June 11, 2007



(Photo by 1st Lt. Patrick Henson, 2nd Bn., 32nd Field Artillery)

A Soldier from Battery B, 2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery Regiment walks through the room while searching for weapons and other illegal material.

Torture House Found

By 1st Lt Charles Bloomfield
2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery Regiment

BAGHDAD – Iraqi Security Forces and Soldiers from the Multi-National Division – Baghdad discovered a “torture house” in the Yarmouk neighborhood of the Iraqi capital May 16. The house was one of two sites found that day containing evidence of criminal activity in the western Baghdad Mansour District.

U.S. Soldiers from Battery B, 2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, along with Iraqi troops from the 2nd Battalion, 5th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, investigated a site where U.S. forces had previously discovered a weapons cache containing nitric acid, as well as other bomb making materials.

The troops revisited the site in hopes of another discovery and found some human skeletal remains in the yard outside of the house. Inside the house, the Soldiers found other disturbing signs as they continued their search.

An upstairs room had the tools and layout of an interrogation room. Two metal mattress springs were laid against the wall near bare electrical wires, a table with odd markings from fire and chemical burns and triangle racks were hung from the ceiling.

This evidence, and knowledge of the area’s history of extrajudicial killings, led the patrol leader, 1st Lt. Patrick Henson, of Orlando, Florida, and his Soldiers to conclude that the house had been used for illegal detentions, and possibly for the abuse or interrogation of kidnapped victims.

While searching the suspected torture house, the Soldiers received a tip from a local Iraqi leading to another weapons cache nearby. The troops discovered the cache concealed in an air duct behind a picture hung on the wall. It consisted of 10 AK-47 magazines, more than 300 rounds of ammunition, three AK-47 assault rifles, an improvised grenade, a large roll of detonation cord, a camcorder, seven washing machine timers, three cell phones and numerous 9-volt batteries.

Iraqi Army troops recovered one bag of ammonium nitrate and two propane tanks from the yard, as well.

Taking explosives, weapons and munitions out of the hands of extremists relies heavily on the support of each local community, said Capt. David Levasseur, public affairs officer for the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division.

“The Iraqi people are the key to our success,” he said. “Only their resolve and determination to help us by talking to security forces will allow us to deny anti-Iraqi forces places to hide.”



(Photo by Sgt. Mike Pryor, 2nd BCT, 82nd Abn. Div. Public Affairs)

Glowing in the Dark

Staff Sgt. Amaurys Rapozo (left), of Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, a squad leader with Company B, 2nd Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, and his platoon leader, 2nd Lt. James Jung from Albuquerque, N.M., search through photographs found in the home of a suspected bomb-maker following a raid in Baghdad’s Sha’ab neighborhood May 16.

Soldiers Still Search for Missing Troops

By Spc. Nathan Hoskins
1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

BAGHDAD – With Soldiers spread throughout southern Baghdad searching around the clock for



(Photo by Spc. Nathan Hoskins, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Two UH-60 Black Hawks from the 3rd “Spearhead” Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, take off from Baghdad International Airport for a mission in support of the ongoing search to find three missing Soldiers.

their missing comrades, it comes as no surprise that they need a constant stream of supplies to keep them going.

Although the 2nd Brigade Combat Team “Commandos,” 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry) troops are sometimes trucking supplies out to their brothers and sisters in arms, they mainly rely on the 1st “Warriors” Air Cavalry Brigade’s aerial assets to get the job done, said Des Moines, Iowa native Staff Sgt. Darren Larson, a brigade supply noncommissioned officer for 2-10th Mountain.

“I know everybody down range really appreciates everything (1st ACB) is doing. We couldn’t have done it without (them),” he said. “(They’re) probably, by far, one of the biggest assets we have.”

From sling-loading supplies to carrying them internally, the Warrior air crews make sure their comrades have everything they need to continue their

See **Search** Page 17

There's a Reason Why They Call It Sensitive!

Previously, I've used this forum to applaud the service and sacrifice of the Soldiers, noncommissioned officers and officers of the Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

While the pride is still there for the hard work being done every day, there are a few of you out there who aren't paying attention to the business at hand.

So, instead of service and sacrifice, the letter 'S' I'm addressing this time is standards! Our leaders set the standard, and it is up to noncommissioned officers to maintain those standards.

While the vast majority of our Soldiers do their job well, each and every day, I've seen far too many reports of sensitive items being "lost" on the battlefield.

How can you misplace a sensitive item? I spend a lot of time in convoys and in aircraft circulating throughout our area of operation, and one simple reflex action every time I move out ensures that I'm squared away.

I pat myself down, physically touching everything I need to take with me – from the night vision goggles on my head to my weapons and my ammunition. And I make sure my team does the same. Once we KNOW everyone is green, good to go, we roll. It's a simple process, yet some NCOs aren't doing it.

That's negligence, at best, and dereliction of duty at worst.

I won't go into the number of times that we've seen a Soldier "lose" a sensitive item, but when they realize the item is lost they invariably are long gone from the site of the

**Pegasus 9
Sends**

**Command Sgt.
Maj. Philip
Johndrow**



loss. Too late. Sorry about that.

Sorry isn't good enough if that item ends up in the wrong hands. We've uncovered weapons caches here in Baghdad and found night vision goggles "lost" elsewhere in Iraq.

That particular piece of government property is the most common item left behind. And that particular piece of property, and the training we've received in its use, is what gives the American Soldier a great advantage in the streets of Baghdad when the sun goes down.

We rule the night. But how long will that last if we hand over our equipment to the insurgents due to carelessness? This is a serious force protection issue, it's a serious accountability issue and safeguarding sensitive items should be a primary concern of the leaders within this division.

I expect NCOs to tighten up. I expect Soldiers to be held to the standard. And that standard, when it comes to accountability of our Soldiers and their sensitive items is simply this: zero tolerance, zero defect.

I'm older than most of you out there. At times, I can suffer from CRS – can't remember ... stuff – but I make sure, always, to

know where my Soldiers and their sensitive items are located. We reached out and touched them before every movement.

Do the same thing, and do it now.

Think about how your mind races when you forget where you left your keys. We've all done it. Then we run around the room tearing things up, cursing (sometimes under our breath) up a storm or begging for divine intervention until you locate them, of course, in the last place you'd expect to find them.

It's not a good feeling.

Now, multiply that sinking feeling of dread by about a thousand and you can begin to imagine the angst involved when someone

leaves a sensitive item on the battlefield.

We owe it to our Soldiers to maintain our equipment and to hold onto it and not hand it over to the enemy for their use! Technology and training enables us to the rule the night here in Baghdad. A set of night vision goggles on the battlefield could end up in the hands of an insurgent sniper wannabe, putting you, or one of your brothers or sisters in arms in grave danger.

Think as you move. Pat yourself down and NCOs – check your troops! It's more than just accountability; it's necessity.

Keep up the good fight and leaders, lead from the front. First Team!

**PROTECT THE
SOLDIERS
PROTECTING YOU...**



Commanding General:

Maj. Gen. Joseph F. Fil, Jr.

Public Affairs Officer:

Lt. Col. Scott Bleichwehl

Command Information Supervisor:

Master Sgt. Dave Larsen

Print NCOIC:

Sgt. Michael Garrett

Editor:

Sgt. Nicole Kojetin

Contributing Writers:

Sgt. 1st Class Kap Kim, Sgt. 1st Class

Robert Timmons, Sgt. 1st Class

Nicholas Conner, Sgt. 1st Class

Rick Emert, Sgt. Jon Cupp, Sgt.

Mike Pryor, Sgt. Robert Yde, Sgt.

Robert Strain, Spc. Alexis

Harrison, Spc. Nathan Hoskins,

Spc. Shea Butler, Spc. L.B. Edgar,

Spc. Ryan Stroud, Spc. Jeffrey

Ledesma, Spc. Alexis Harrison,

Spc. Courtney Marulli, Pfc.

William Hatton, Pfc. Benjamin

Gable, Pfc. Ben Fox, Pfc.

Nathaniel Smith

Contact *Crossed Sabers* at VOIP 242-

4093, or DSN 318-847-1855 or e-mail

david.j.larsen@mnd-b.army.mil or

nikki.lemke@mnd-b.army.mil.

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Brothers in Arms

Sgt. 1st Class Robert Farnsworth, a Rochester, N.Y. native, a platoon sergeant with Co. A, 325th Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, pulls security next to a soldier from the 3rd Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division during a morning clearing operation in the Iraqi Capital's Adhamiyah District May 23.



(Photo by Sgt. Mike Pryor, 2nd BCT, 82nd Abn. Div. Public Affairs)

Surge Affecting More than Security in Baghdad

By Master Sgt. Dave Larsen
1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – The surge of Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces into Baghdad neighborhoods is aimed at improving the security situation in the Iraqi capital. Yet, there are other programs benefiting by having more boots on the ground during Operation Fardh Al-Qanoon.

“The surge has assisted civil military operations by putting more Coalition eyes on the environment, so that we get a more responsive analysis of what essential services and economic development services are needed by the populace,” said Lt. Col. John Rudolph, the assistant chief of staff of civil military operations for Multi-National Division – Baghdad.

Rudolph said civil military operations in MND-B’s area of operation, which run the gamut from governance to agriculture to infrastructure to economic improvements, have already dedicated more than \$163 million of Commander’s Emergency Relief Project (CERP) funds to projects all aimed at improving the quality of life for Iraqis living in and around Baghdad.

“This really is about improving the quality of life for the Iraqis,” said Brig. Gen. Vincent K. Brooks, the deputy commanding general for support with MND-B. That “support” role not only touches the lives of the 50,000-plus troops working under MND-B, but also the Iraqi people. He said it’s challenging to move ahead with quality of life initiatives in the face of extremist efforts to stop them.

“There is a perception that I’ve seen in every sector of this region we have responsibility for, when I talk to the Iraqis, that the Americans have the ability to put a man on the moon, and yet they can’t provide us with electricity,” Brooks said. “That whole idea of an expectation that we promised and haven’t delivered causes a great deal of problems.”

Lights Out?

Most westerners and Americans, for sure, cannot conceive flicking on a light switch on the wall and having it click with no effect. Yet, Baghdad has *never* had electricity flowing to its six million residents 24 hours a day. Electricity, or the lack thereof, was also tool used by the Ba’athist regime to reward or punish the population.

“You saw areas favored by Saddam and his regime see power longer throughout the day, but they still didn’t get power 24/7,” Rudolph said. “They still had to use what they called the ‘generator men,’ who were entrepreneurs who had their own generators and supplied power to local neighborhoods for the ‘off power’ periods, even during Saddam’s period.”

Rudolph said that providing power to Baghdad residents remains a priority, as witnessed by the 62 projects accounting for more than a quarter of the civil military operations funds dedicated this year – more than \$44 million. The challenge to get the lights on throughout the Iraqi capital remains an



(Photo by Lt. Col. Scott Bleichwehl, MND-B Public Affairs Officer)

An Iraqi man leans on his push cart load of wood before making a delivery on Baghdad’s Haifa Street May 15. The area had been a hot-bed of violence and extremist activity, but is returning to a peaceful normalcy of day-to-day living.

ongoing issue.

“It was an inefficient system to begin with and what we have done is by our electrification projects, in general, we’ve improved distribution so that the power that comes in is distributed more efficiently,” Rudolph said. “However, the level of available power goes down. It goes out to more places, but it doesn’t last as long.”

Brooks said the provision of power to Baghdad neighborhoods remains a function of governance, and it will be the Iraqi government who will need to illuminate the Iraqi capital.

“Our effort here has to be more than a physical one, to not only find ways to improve those systems physically, but also have to work back through that governance effort to ensure that people who are in positions of responsibility in government are not sectarian and are not biased in the delivery of essential services to all people,” Brooks noted.

Success Stories

Improved security in some areas of the city has allowed life to flourish for some Baghdad residents. Temporary barriers erected throughout the city have created what military officials call “safe markets” and “safe neighborhoods.” Rudolph said the market areas have benefited from the temporary barriers, keeping suicide car bombers at bay while allowing commerce to continue.

The marketplace in the Rusafa District in what is known as “Old Baghdad” on the east side of the Tigris River is one of those success stories.

“Shoppers feel much safer going into the market now and they’ve actually seen an increase in the number of local citizens using that market,” Rudolph said. “It’s a perception, an attitude that the stigma of the random violence has lessened.”

The Doura Market is often a stop for visiting dignitaries to Baghdad in the southern Rashid District. The 1st Cavalry Division’s 2nd “Black Jack” Brigade Combat Team from Fort Hood, Texas conducted the initial assessment of the area and started the revitalization project there.

Doura Market, Rudolph said, went from an unorganized street market of only a few dozen vendors to a thriving market place with more than 200 sellers now. He said the

4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division from Fort Riley, Kan., now operates in Rashid, and even more improvements are underway.

“4-1st Infantry is following up in their footsteps with a barrier plan just like Rusafa,” Rudolph said. “The shoppers (there) feel much safer in that environment. They’ve got solar-powered lights to provide security in the area. They have host nation security forces doing random patrols of the area, and because of these security measures more shops have opened up.”

Haifa Street in the city’s center, west of the Tigris River, was once known as a hot-bed of extremist activity. It was a battle ground for the 1st Cavalry Division when they operated in Baghdad in 2004-05, and again earlier this year. The battle ground is now a model neighborhood.

“We’ve turned that around,” Brooks said. “Now, we have a thriving market area that is starting to grow and a revitalization process that will make the Iraqis really proud and recognize that things have improved.”

All things start with security, Brooks said, but quality of life initiatives have been brought to life in areas of the Iraqi capital where the neighborhood and district advisory councils have worked in harmony for the good of their constituents.

“It’s where people in the neighborhood, people in the district recognize that they have needs and they’re the ones who should represent the people in that area,” Brooks said. “Mansour has a very active district council that is functioning very, very well, and our recent security operations have enhanced that, so they feel more and more secure.”

“They still remain periodically threatened, though,” Brooks said. “You have to recognize that people who are performing well, especially in harmony, are often targeted by extremists who don’t want to see good governance to ever form here.”

Short Term versus Long Term

CERP funds are a “band-aid,” Rudolph said, a way for Coalition Forces to provide immediate aid where needed. But MND-B, in conjunction with the State Department, is looking at long-term solutions to many of the issues facing the residents of the Iraqi capital.

“They use training programs for business practices and they also do micro-grants

and micro-loans, but those are ‘payments in kind,’ Rudolph explained. “If a business needed, say, a cash register to be able to transact business activities, they wouldn’t get the money to buy it, they would get a cash register. It’s the items they would need, not the cash. As much as security has improved, we still don’t want cash-flow going into the hands of the wrong parties. That’s the best means of addressing it.”

Brooks said MND-B has shifted its focus to long-term investments, versus short-term “band-aids” over the past three months.

“There’s been progress, but the approach that has been taken over the last several years for divisions like the 1st Cavalry Division was to find problems and fix them, and do it quickly,” Brooks said. “We’ve had success in that. But the reality is that it doesn’t leave an enduring systemic effect, so we’ve shifted our focus here over the last three months to look at the holistic system sewage on the west side of the river, for example, and identifying where the pump stations are, where the lift stations are, where the pipes that may be broken, where there is standing sewage; then, applying the resources, within the city of Baghdad and the government of Iraq, where they really matter.”

By looking at the broader picture, and engaging the local, district and provincial governments, Brooks said long-term progress is possible.

“What’s changed, I think over that last few years, is how much the larger infrastructure has been revitalized,” Brooks said. “Water pipes have been replaced, electrical transformers have been installed, but it’s that last 100 meters worth of the service that really still has to become focused. Then people will really recognize a difference.”

The Heart of a Soldier

While on one hand, extremist elements are attempting to create chaos in the city streets and deter progress and quality of life initiatives, Brooks pointed in the other direction, to the American Soldier, and attributes much of the progress made to date in the Iraqi capital to the dedication of troops putting their boots on the ground to interact with residents and local officials.

“We wouldn’t have any of these successes, we’d have no progress if it weren’t for the contributions of our troops who are out there,” Brooks said. “We ask an awful lot of our Soldiers who are deployed over here. Certainly, we know we put them into harm’s way to accomplish whatever mission we set out to do. But their energy, their passion, their willingness to keep trying in the face of deliberate set backs at the hands of the enemy or at the hands of sometimes the Iraqis themselves, they’re out there every day and they keep moving forward.”

“In all these areas, not only security, but in governance it may be that the first, best way for people to come together is because an American Soldier encouraged a district council member to sit in the same room with another,” Brooks added. “And governance begins, then, with the passion and the heart of the Soldier in this country.”

Iraqi Heat is Dangerous to Deployed Soldiers

By Sgt. Nicole Kojetin
1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – The hot summer months are swiftly rolling in, and with each added degree comes an increased risk of a heat injury.

Common heat injuries include sunburn, heat edema, prickly heat, heat cramps, heat exhaustion and heat stroke. Troops can reduce the threat by knowing what causes heat injuries, and how to prevent and treat them.

“Sunburn is caused by direct exposure to the ultraviolet rays of sunlight,” said Maj. Chris Medellin, a Multi-National Division – Baghdad preventive medicine physician. The longer the exposure, the worse the burn, said the San Antonio native. Two other common irritating, but relatively minor injuries are heat edema and prickly heat.

“Heat edema is simply a benign swelling of lower legs which may occur in un-acclimatized individuals,” Medellin said. “Prickly heat is an itchy red rash with numerous miniscule bumps in areas of restrictive clothing and excessive sweating.”

The last three heat injuries are progressive and build on each other. The first level, heat exhaustion, is a real danger for Soldiers on foot patrol as the constant motion in the high heat is bound to cause excessive sweating. This injury is caused by excess water loss.

“The individual will develop symptoms of dehydration to include rapid breathing, profuse sweating, headache, weakness, unsteady balance, chills and nausea,” Medellin said. “Heat cramps may sometimes be present.”

Heat cramps are painful constrictions of the muscles of the arms, legs, abdomen, or



(Photo by Sgt. Nicole Kojetin, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Spc. Erik Gonzalez tries to cool off during a clearing operation May 10 in West Rashid, a southern district of Baghdad. The Sun Valley, Texas native and his comrades from Company C, 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment spent the day searching for weapons caches and insurgents.

back caused by large salt losses through sweating. Without intervention, heat exhaustion can progress to heat stroke.

“Heat stroke is a true medical emergency,” Medellin said. “Heat stroke means that a person’s body temperature control has broken down, and the internal body temperature is excessively high—up to 106 or 108° F. Even at lower body temperatures like 101 to 105° F, heat stroke must be considered as a possibility if mental function is impaired.”

During the hot weather season, any Soldier who develops confusion, unconsciousness, or other significant mental changes should be treated as a heat stroke victim until proven otherwise.

“Although heat stroke may be accompanied by a severe headache, upset stomach

and weakness, its onset is frequently heralded by the sudden occurrence of convulsions, delirium, or loss of consciousness,” Medellin said.

If a troop witnesses someone who may have a heat injury they should immediately take action.

“Move the individual to a cool and shady area,” he said. “If no shade is present, improvise some type of shade,” Medellin said. “For more serious heat injury: dampen skin and clothing with water and fan the individual. If ice is available, place some in individual’s armpits and groin areas for faster cooling. Stop active cooling if shivering begins.”

The next step is to loosen the heat casualty’s clothing to improve air circulation,

unless in a chemical environment.

“Loosen means un-blouse boots, untie or loosen boots, unbuckle belt and unbutton top button of trousers, unbutton or unzip coat, unfasten wrist buttons, remove body armor, and remove helmet (unless under risk of attack),” Medellin said.

If the Soldier is conscious and not vomiting, help the Soldier re-hydrate. Have them consume at least one quart of cool water over a 30 minute period. Also, have them eat a salty snack. Another option is to have them drink a sports drink mixed half and half with regular water that will replenish the electrolytes in the system.

“If cramps continue for more than an hour, seek medical attention through local medical assets,” he said.

For sunburns, cool the skin with water and protect with a dry dressing as tolerated. Consider evacuation to a medical facility, especially for severe or widespread second degree sunburns.

He also offered some advice for preventing injuries before they start. Some high risk activities that should be avoided during the summer months are restrictive dieting or fasting which reduces the amount of salt intake and excessive exercise or exertion.

“Seek shade whenever possible. Eat regular well-balanced meals and stay hydrated,” he said. “Keep cold water and sports drinks available in an ice chest on tactical vehicles when on operations. Avoid physical training and conducting operations during hottest part of day.”

The bottom line, Medellin said Soldiers need to stay hydrated and to be aware of what their body is saying and look out for their comrades to avoid heat injuries.

Summer Months Mean Watching Diet, Exercise and Supplements

By Spc. Alexis Harrison
2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE PROSPERITY, Iraq – While in Iraq, many Soldiers take the opportunity to focus on getting healthy and working out.

Some of these Soldiers run, some walk, some hit the basketball court, some play football and some hit the weight rooms. For a small portion of these Soldiers looking to get fit, supplements might seem like an easy way to get fast results. Unfortunately, while some supplements help, others might do more damage than what they’re worth.

As temperatures in Baghdad easily peak 100 degrees, the need for proper nutrition rises just as quickly as the mercury.

Drinking plenty of water and eating a balanced diet are important to surviving the heat according to the 2nd Brigade Combat Team’s surgeon, Lt. Col. Margret Merino.

She said that knowing what you’re putting in your body can be one of the easiest ways to get through these hot summer months while still achieving your fitness goals.

“Right now, we’re trying to educate leaders and Soldiers to the dangers linked to supplement use in hot weather,” the Buffalo, N.Y., native said.

Some supplements can’t really hurt you. If taken improperly, the worst that could happen is either nothing at all or a little extra flab around your waist if you don’t exercise.

Protein is a very popular supplement that’s designed to fuel your muscles with the food and amino acids necessary to grow and repair themselves. Taking a protein supplement without exercising is basically the same as eating extra food. It amounts to extra calories your body doesn’t need that your



(Photo by Spc. Alexis Harrison, 2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

A handful of the wrong dietary supplements could cause heat-related health issues for Soldiers.

body will store as fat.

Creatine is another supplement designed to draw water from your bloodstream into your muscles giving you a svelte appearance, more stamina and bigger “pumps” in the weight room. Again, just taking creatine won’t help you unless you’re on a good diet and exercise program.

The downside to creatine, said Merino, is its design. It takes water vital to the rest of your body and stores it in your muscles, effectively robbing the rest of your body of the hydration it needs.

Some of the most abused supplements of all are the ones that promise to help you shed pound after pound of unwanted fat. These types of supplements usually contain copious amounts of caffeine which will dehydrate you faster than wearing your gear all day. Now, is a little caffeine bad? Not

necessarily, Merino said.

Caffeine has shown its value by giving a jump start to a routine and decrease pain responsiveness. However, a lot of diet pills contain more than 100 milligrams of caffeine per pill. That’s the equivalent of about 3 cups of coffee per pill, and some recommended doses are two pills three times a day.

Of all the herbal supplements out there, ephedrine was given the spotlight of shame a few years ago after Minnesota Vikings player, Korey Stringer collapsed and later died of heat-related injuries directly linked to use of ephedrine-containing supplements.

Merino said that ephedrine, synepherine and caffeine-containing supplements act as amphetamines, effectively raising the body’s core temperature and not letting the body cool itself. This, she said, could lead to a heat injury or worse.

Capt. Ken Murray, the 2nd Brigade Combat Team’s medical planner, said that while working in a emergency room, he witnessed first-hand how taking supplements and too much heat and exertion could lead to serious consequences.

“On numerous occasions I saw guys in the Airborne and Special Forces be brought into the emergency room and need to be resuscitated because they were taking supplements while being out in the heat,” said the Baton Rouge, La., native.

Both Murray and Merino agreed that drinking water, following work/rest cycles and having a good diet are the best ways to combat heat injuries.

Merino urges anyone considering starting a new diet or thinking about taking supplements to go to their local medical clinic and consult with a health professional to assess the risks and the effects.

America's First Team First-Ever to Fire Excalibur Precision Munition in Combat

By Spc. Jeffrey Ledesma
1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – During World War II, the 1st Cavalry Division saw action in the Pacific Theater and was the first unit to enter Manila during the liberation of the Philippines. When war broke out on the Korean peninsula, America's First Team in 1950 conducted the first amphibious landing of the Korean War and during the subsequent counteroffensive, was the first unit to enter the North Korean capital of Pyongyang. In the early stages of the Vietnam War, the 1st Cavalry became the first fully committed division in the war and now during Operation Iraqi Freedom 06-08 they write another first into the history books.

Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers with the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, conducted the first operational firing of the XM982 Excalibur, a 155mm precision-guided, extended-range artillery projectile, targeting a well-known safe house for insurgents in northern region of the Iraqi capital May 5.

Elements from the 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment, and their fellow Ironhorse comrades with 1st Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, teamed up to fire the historical shot documenting the future capabilities of the Army's artillery power and pin-point precision.

Donned in their full battle-rattle gear Ironhorse troopers headed out on a dismounted patrol towards the impact site in the green rural area of Taji during the early morning hours and after securing the site they headed for an observation point.

The Excalibur, a combination of U.S. guidance expertise and Swedish airframe



(U.S. Army Photo)

An XM982 Excalibur precision-guided artillery round falls onto a well-known insurgent safe house during combat operations in the northern region of Baghdad May 5. Soldiers of the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division fired the round from their M109A6 Paladin howitzer on Camp Taji, Iraq. The event marked the first-ever operational firing of the XM982 Excalibur projectile.

experience, targeted a house with a history of insurgent activity situated in the farmlands about two miles from base.

According to the commander of the 1st Bn., 7th Cav. Regt., Lt. Col. Kevin Macwatters, the owner of the house was detained by the previous unit for the murders of several Iraqis and documented on a videotape was the scenes of the insurgent and his family pushing bodies into the Tigris River.

"Whenever we conduct missions in the area, terrorist operating in the area would flee to this house because it's isolated, so they feel safe here," said Macwatters.

Since then the unit has received intelligence of the continued use of the house as a safe haven for militia activity in the area and

last month they were able to confirm that information after a cordon and search of the house and the surrounding area uncovered artillery rounds, mortar rounds, and rocket launching rails.

Macwatters added that the use of this GPS guided artillery round is part of our overall campaign of taking safe houses away from the enemy and by limiting the enemy's mobility. The decrease of the insurgent mobility has lead to an increase in the amount of information local nationals are willing to provide, because they don't feel the constant threat of a strong insurgent hold on the village.

And with its accuracy and increased effectiveness, the Excalibur reduces the

logistical burden for deployed ground forces. It also provides lower collateral damage through its concentrated fragmentation pattern, increased precision and near-vertical descent.

"This could be a tool we use in the future to precisely eliminate enemy equipment, safe houses, weapons caches, or whatever the case may be," said Macwatters.

However before the call for fire and the thundering sound of a safe house crumbling down to ruins, Soldiers headed to Fort Sill, Okla. Preparation for this day initiated 15 months ago when troopers stayed at the 'Home of the Field Artillery' and vigilantly trained on the techniques necessary to fire the round.

"Troopers of the 1-82 have all been working really hard waiting for this day. They are thrilled and honored to get to be the ones to shoot it," said Lt. Col. Martin Clausen commander of 1st Bn., 82nd FA, and native of Vista, Calif.

And one lucky 21-year-old 'Comanche' trooper got to make the call for the firing of the technologically advanced artillery round and consequently rang himself and the First Team back into the history books.

"I think it's a great opportunity for us to keep up the legacy of being the first to do everything," said Spc. Richard Paliki, a forward observer with Company C, 1st Bn., 7 Cav. Reg. "We are the best. It's been proven time and time before and we're just going to continue to do that."

From "Splash, Out," to "Splash, Over," Paliki added the addition of being the first unit to ever fire an Excalibur round in a combat, which is surely going to make an impact on the capabilities of fighting forces on the ground in Iraq.



(Photo by Staff Sgt. Raymond Kokel, 1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Moving Out To Cobra

Soldiers from the 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment moved supplies and equipment into their newly-established combat outpost, dubbed "COP Cobra," near Taji, Iraq May 21. The Soldiers will work out of the outpost, going on patrols in search of insurgent cells and helping the local populace to rid their streets of terrorists.



(Photo by Staff Sgt. Jon Cupp, 1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Lock and Load!

(Above) Maj. Christopher Kuhn (left), team chief for the 3rd Brigade, 9th Iraqi Army Division (Mech.) Military Transition Team who hails from Middletown, Pa., shows an Iraqi officer with the 3rd Bde., 9th Iraqi Army Div. how to teach his fellow officers to use targets to help them zero or "sight in" their M-4 rifles on a range at Camp Taji, Iraq May 27. The Iraqi Army is currently replacing its old Soviet-made AK-47 rifles with M-16 and M-4 rifles. The M-4s and M-16A4's are considered easier to shoot than the AK-47 and are easier to find replacement parts for than the old Soviet-made rifles, said Martin Anderson, a senior range trainer. (Left) Iraqi Army officers from the 3rd Brigade, 9th Iraqi Army Division (Mechanized) load magazines into their new M-4 rifles during a range on Camp Taji, Iraq May 27.

Troops Repair Bombed Bridge

By Maj. Randall Baucom
1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs Officer

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Coalition Forces worked quickly to repair a bridge, damaged by insurgents, on a major Iraqi highway May 15. The south-bound bridge on Highway 1, which spans the Grand Canal, was attacked by a suicide car bomber May 13.

Soldiers from the 502nd Engineer Company, 565th Engineer Battalion, responded to the attack in less than 36 hours, linking up on Camp Taji with Soldiers from the 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, who provided security for the operations.

In the early morning hours of May 15, Soldiers from the 502nd Engineer Company arrived on the site and began a thorough inspection of the bridge. It was then determined that a Mabry-Johnson Bridge would be used to span the 30-foot-by-40-foot hole created by the suicide

bomber.

The May 13 blast blew a large hole in the center span of the bridge, but fortunately failed to cause significant damage to the main superstructure of the Bridge. Al Qaeda insurgents operating in the area are believed to be responsible for the attack.

The Soldiers immediately went to work constructing the bridge they brought down on trucks from Balad. The 30-meter span, took 48 hours to construct.

"It was important to provide immediate repair to this vital piece of infrastructure that is a key route for commuters to Baghdad and for commerce. The 502nd worked tirelessly to make sure these repairs got done," said Alexandria, Va., native Capt. Nathaniel Davis the brigade engineer officer for the 1st "Ironhorse" Brigade Combat Team. "The attack on this bridge by Al Qaeda is an attack on the Iraqi people themselves. I hope someone comes forward to say who is responsible so these terrorists can be brought to justice."



(Photo by Sgt. Raymond Kokel, 1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Soldiers of the 502nd Engineer Company assemble pieces of a Mabry-Johnson Bridge May 15, making repairs in the aftermath of a suicide car bomb attack two days earlier. The engineers assembled the bridge to provide temporary repair to the bridge spanning the Grand Canal on Highway 1.

Fort Lewis Troops Set Up Combat Outpost in Karkh

By Spc. Alexis Harrison
2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

BAGHDAD – The troops from Task Force 1-14 Cavalry, 1st Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment, operating in the Iraqi capital as part of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, have had to go through many changes.

First, they moved from Forward Operating Base Falcon to FOB Union III after the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division showed up a few months ago from Fort Riley, Kan.

Then, the squadron of cavalymen who ride on their fleet-footed Strykers received the mission to go down south of the capital about 80 miles to Diwaniyah, to help take back a community on the brink of peril.

Finally, the boys from Fort Lewis, Wash., got to come back and begin their newest mission: stand up a combat outpost and patrol the volatile streets of Karkh and Haifa Street, near the city's center.

According to one platoon leader, 1st Lt. Courtney Dean, even though the weather is scalding hot and they've been all over Iraq, things are improving and they hope to make the same improvements in Karkh as they did in Diwaniyah and Abu Discher.

Dean and the rest of his 3rd Platoon, Troop C, was out on mission just like any other day, even though the temperature peaked at 110 degrees. Sweat poured off the troops during their reconnaissance of a rail yard and warehouse compound on the north



(Photo by Spc. Alexis Harrison, 2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Members from Troop C, 1st Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment out of Fort Lewis, Wash., drop off supplies to their comrades setting up a combat outpost in Baghdad's Karkh District May 23.

side of Karkh near the Baghdad train station.

Dean said that since they're new to the area, they want to get to know what's happening in and around places that could be seen as places to store weapons or hideouts for anti-Iraq forces.

About a dozen huge warehouses sit near the rail yard. Dean said that the yard used to be one of the main railroad hubs in all of

Iraq. Its size still shows of the commerce that once traveled into and out of the capital, but the dust and debris covering the area tells a tale of inactivity.

Inside the warehouses, guards stand at their posts. They keep a watchful eye over stockpiles of items like rice, oil or sugar. As the troops approached the first building, the air drastically changed from the usual smells

of the city to a fragrant, flowery smell. The warehouse was filled with laundry detergent.

Dean said that many of the warehouses are owned by the government and are used as distribution centers for supplies needed by the residents of the community. Some of the buildings, however, are privately owned, but hold the same purpose.

Before the Soldiers made their way to the warehouses, they had to make a vital stop at their new combat outpost along the river. They delivered supplies like insect repellent, mosquito netting and ice to their comrades already manning the post.

Tooman said that everyone will have a turn manning the post, and it's best to get it equipped with everything they'll need during the blazing summer months.

Dean said that the new outpost will offer them a way to keep a constant, 24-hour presence in the area to keep the quiet that's been won by many battles in months past.

"Having the combat power projected into the area will make the enemy think twice about doing anything," he said.

After several hours of patrolling in the heat, the fatigue was shown by the sweat-soaked uniforms. Although several of the troops remarked about the heat, none of them stopped or slowed down other than to take a drink of water. The troops kept moving forward to accomplish the mission.

Even after being moved all over Iraq, making it through one grueling summer and getting extended, Dean said that the mission is still the most important thing.



(Photo by Spc. Alexis Harrison, 2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Former Iraqi Prime Minister Visits Soldiers for Memorial Day

Former Iraqi Prime Minister, Ibraheem Al Jafari, meets troops from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, to honor their commitment to America and Iraq during the Memorial Day weekend at Forward Operating Base Prosperity in central Baghdad May 27.

Months of Recovery Lead to Return to Iraq

By Sgt. Robert Yde
2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

BAGHDAD – On a recent patrol through the Haifa Street area, Capt. John Gilliam was surprised at what he saw. The last time that he had been on Haifa Street was Feb. 3, and at that time, the area still had the notorious distinction of being known as one of Baghdad's most dangerous neighborhoods.

Today Haifa Street continues to show signs of new life as more and more businesses open and people continue to move back into the area daily. This was not the same place that Gilliam, the commander of Troop C, 4th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, remembered.

"Haifa Street is a different place because when I left, you didn't go into the alleyways unless you were going after somebody," the Charlottesville, Va., native said. "Now, we were able to walk through the markets and walk through the alleyways, and there were kids playing everywhere, and there were people everywhere. There were businesses open and cars up and down the streets. It's pretty amazing."

The groundwork for much of the progress that Haifa Street has seen over the past several months is a direct result of the efforts that Gilliam's troop put into ridding the area of anti-Iraqi forces earlier this year. Then, the neighborhood resembled a ghost town, and the only sounds that one heard were the daily fire fights and explosions.

Walking through the streets, Gilliam, 29, said that even though the area has completely turned around and is now one of the city's safer areas, he couldn't help but scan the rooftops and alleyways -- something that was just second nature to him from his days of patrolling Haifa Street.

He pointed out that Coalition Forces have not received any enemy contact in the area since Feb. 3.

That night Gilliam's Soldiers were on Haifa Street preparing for a raid to catch a sniper.

Arriving to the vicinity of the building that they suspected the sniper was operating out of, Gilliam and his Soldiers quickly moved up and entered the building only to find it abandoned. They then searched the surrounding buildings, and while they discovered evidence of insurgent activity, they were unable to locate the individual they were after.

As they started moving back toward their vehicles, Gilliam received information from one of the helicopter crews that were on hand providing air support for the mission that there were seven individuals with AK-47s moving through one of the alleyways.

"We moved one of our vehicles up into a blocking position, and we started moving dismounts up through the alleyways toward the individuals to try to get into position to where we could engage or capture them," he said. "We started taking pretty heavy small arms fire from down the alleyway, and we couldn't get a clear shot because they were shielding themselves behind children."

As one of his platoons continued to move down the alleyway, Gilliam and his radioman, Spc. Stephen Battisto, stopped about 20 yards behind the other Soldiers so that Gilliam could make a call on his radio.

In the moment that they knelt there, Battisto recalls sensing that something wasn't right, and then hearing a noise that he described as a, "ting, ting, ting."

The noise was the sound of a grenade hitting the ground beside them, and it was one that Battisto said he immediately recognized from his days in basic training.

"I had a drill sergeant who had a dummy grenade and everyday, at some point, he'd throw it, and you'd hear just a 'ting, ting, ting' on the floor. That's what I remember," the Chicago native explained. "I guess it was just instinct."

The grenade, which the Soldiers suspect was thrown from one of the rooftops, landed about four feet from Battisto and Gilliam, and, acting on instinct, Battisto pushed Gilliam to the ground just as the grenade exploded.

The majority of the shrapnel from the blast lodged itself



(Photo by Sgt. Robert Yde, 2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Capt. John Gilliam, the commander of Troop C, 4th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, speaks with a Red Crescent worker before a humanitarian mission on Haifa Street Jan. 29. This mission was a success, but five days later, Gilliam was injured by an explosion from a grenade while pursuing insurgents operating in the area.

into Battisto's radio pack, probably saving both their lives.

Battisto said he shook Gilliam and asked him if he was OK, to which Gilliam responded that his leg was hurt.

"I tried to help him up, but he couldn't put pressure on one of his legs," Battisto said.

Initially, neither Gilliam nor his medics thought the wound to his leg was very serious, but what they didn't know at the time was that a small piece of shrapnel had severed the main artery running through his calf.

"I didn't think that I was that seriously wounded at the time, and I tried to stay out there and stay on the radio and keep the situation under control," Gilliam said.

As his leg began to swell and lose feeling and his foot started to turn blue, even Gilliam could no longer deny that his injuries needed immediate medical attention and made the call to have himself evacuated to the combat support hospital located in the International Zone.

"Once we got to the CSH, they evaluated my leg, and as soon as they cut my pants off, they realized really quickly that I had some very serious internal bleeding -- it's called compartment syndrome," Gilliam said.

He said that by the time he reached the hospital his calf had swelled to the point where it was larger than his thigh. That night would begin a series of surgeries and therapy sessions that Gilliam would have to endure over several months.

"The main artery in your leg is right behind your knee and the piece of shrapnel literally went in and exploded that entire artery, so they took a vein out of my right, inner thigh," he explained. "They slit my leg down both sides and took the vein out of [my thigh] and completely repaired the artery."

After two surgeries and several blood transfusions, the doctors decided Gilliam was stable enough to be moved back to Brooks Army Medical Center, located at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio.

Accompanying Gilliam was his wife, Capt. Erin Gilliam, who at the time was the operations officer for the 15th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd BCT, based at FOB Falcon in south Baghdad.

"I was with him the entire way, which was a good thing because it helped put my nerves at ease a little bit," she explained.

During his first month at BAMC, Gilliam's leg under-

went eight more surgeries, including one to treat an infection that had developed.

"My leg got infected so they had to cut out all the tissue on the left, outside of my calf. They then had to take a skin graft from my upper thigh," he said.

During his stay in the hospital, Gilliam said the one goal that never left his mind was returning to his Soldiers, even though doctors initially told him he may never return to Iraq.

"Their initial estimates were that I would never come back, but, to me, it just never was a question," Gilliam said.

While at BAMC, his wife's unit had relocated to FOB Prosperity, and they would now be based together for the remainder of their deployment.

"Once my wife got back [to Iraq], then you're talking my troop and my wife -- there was really not much else for me at that point," he said. "Everything that I cared about was [in Iraq], so mentally I was ready to come back."

Gilliam said that it was right after his wife left BAMC to return to Iraq that his sole focus became returning to Iraq himself.

"My wife was great and got me through this whole experience. I couldn't have done a single bit of it without her," Gilliam said. "As soon as she left, there was nobody else there to baby me and cook me meals ... so I put my crutches aside and decided that I didn't care how much it hurt. I wasn't using crutches anymore."

After nearly a month and a half in the hospital, Gilliam was released to outpatient status, living in a guest house at BAMC and attending physical therapy sessions every day.

"I started out very basic, just lots of stretches, and then moved to torture machines, essentially, which mechanically yank your foot up and down and left and right," Gilliam said of his therapy. "I also jumped rope, did a lot of calf raises and lots of other things aimed at loosening my foot up."

For Gilliam, the daily therapy sessions were exhausting.

"You go from lying flat on your back in a hospital bed to doing five hours of therapy a day so your body's exhausted," he explained. "From getting off of all the drugs your body's been on, to just the flat-out blunt trauma of having a traumat-

Georgian Infantry Battalion Celebrates Independence

By Spc. Alexis Harrison
2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE UNION I, Iraq – The Republic of Georgia has been around for as many as 2,600 years. Although its history is rich with tradition, Georgia hasn't always been able to call itself a free country until May 26, 1918 when it broke apart from the Trans-Caucasus Commissariat.

To celebrate their 89 years of independence, soldiers from the 33rd Light Infantry Battalion, 3rd Brigade of the Georgian Army, stationed in Baghdad's "International Zone" held a ceremony and feast to honor their country's independence that their fellow countrymen had fought for in the past.

Hundreds of soldiers lined up amongst humvees and even a tank that the previous unit had refurbished.

During the national anthem, Tavisupleba (Liberty), the Georgian flag was unfurled as several distinguished guests were on hand, including Col. Bryan Roberts, commander of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, and Maj. Gen. Joseph F. Fil Jr., commanding general



(Photo by Spc. Alexis Harrison, 2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Sgt. Maj. Manuchar Davituri from the 33rd Light Infantry Battalion, 3rd Brigade of the Georgian Army, awards one of his soldiers a certificate of achievement during a ceremony dedicated to the republic's independence day on Forward Operating Base Union I May 26.

of the Multi-National Division – Baghdad and the 1st Cavalry Division.

During his speech, the battalion com-

mander, Maj. Nikoloz Ikoshvili, remarked of the honor and integrity of being a Georgian fighting for his country's free-

dom and how important it was for him and his soldiers to be in Iraq helping the Iraqi people.

Dozens of certificates and plaques were handed out to guests and soldiers of the battalion for recognition of achievements or support of ongoing operations done by the battalion.

After the ceremony, all guests were invited into the palace to dine on traditional Georgian cuisine and local fare.

Several toasts were made by the battalion commander, the battalion's sergeant major, Sgt. Maj. Manuchar Davituri, Fil and Roberts.

"You are doing your country a great service," Fil said. "Your fellow soldiers and families back home should be proud of what you are doing here in Iraq."

The battalion of infantrymen had recently replaced the Bat' Umi Battalion after the tank battalion stayed on the base and worked in the heavily-guarded International Zone for more than six months.

The battalion's main role is to guard several entry points to the International Zone, as well as man its embassy.

Months of Recovery, Therapy Lead to Troop Commanders Return

Return

From Page 8

ic injury like that. It takes your body a long time to re-regulate itself."

Throughout the daily therapy sessions, returning to the Soldiers who he had commanded for nearly the past 18 months remained Gilliam's main motivation.

"You train with these guys; you watch them grow and mature. You watch kids, who were privates (and) are now sergeants. You watch sergeants who are now staff sergeants," he said. "That's been my whole life for 18 months. That was the worst part. Getting on a helicopter and leaving my guys was hands down the worst part of the entire experience and everything after that was, 'OK, what's next? What's the next step in getting back here?'"

In early April, Gilliam said he was starting to feel that he was getting to the point, physically, where he could return to Iraq and started putting pressure on the doctors to clear him to return to duty. Before he was released from the hospital, Gilliam had to demonstrate that he could run and had a certain degree of flexibility in his Achilles, among other things.

Although far from being in the same physical state he was before the injury, Gilliam was released from BAMC and returned to Iraq May 6.

While he was gone, the surge had begun to be implemented and battle spaces had shifted. No longer were his Soldiers responsible for Haifa Street. Instead, their new mission has them manning the entry control points into and throughout the International Zone.

"It's a bit of a different change of pace," Gilliam said of his new mission. "Being on ECPs is not familiar to me. From a physical standpoint, it's easier, of course -- it's much easier for me, but from a mental standpoint, I still want to be the guy out on Haifa Street every day."

Although it's no longer his troop's responsibility, Gilliam was given the opportunity to return to Haifa Street on the second day he was back, when brigade commander, Col. Bryan Roberts invited Gilliam to accompany him on a patrol through the area.

During the four-hour patrol, Gilliam said he was surprised to see the progress that has been made in the area over the past several months. It also was an opportunity to test



(Photo by Sgt. Robert Yde, 2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

A young Haifa Street resident shakes hands with Capt. John Gilliam, commander of Troop C, 4th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, during a humanitarian aid mission Jan. 29.

himself physically.

"I lost 25 pounds, so I'm not anywhere near the level of physical strength or endurance that I was before ... and I hadn't worn my body armor, and that's a heavy set of equipment to get used to again, but it was fine, though," he said. "You get tired a little bit easier, and I was starting to get tired at the end of it, but physically, I'd like to go out there and do it again. That's what comes natural to me - being out there in sector is what I'm used to."

As he prepared for that patrol, Gilliam also saw the effects on his equipment from the shrapnel for the first time.

"I thought it was only just the one piece of shrapnel, and it was only the one piece of shrapnel that physically affected my body, but when I came back and put all my equipment together to try to go out, my kneepads were shredded and fell apart as I tried to put them on because little pieces of shrapnel went through them," he said. "My CamelBak - I poured water into it, and all the water poured right out the bottom of it because of the shrapnel up in it. My hand-mic was also completely shredded by the shrapnel."

Seeing the damage to his equipment reaffirmed to Gilliam just how lucky he and his Soldiers were.

"We were very fortunate that nobody else got injured,"

he said. "If one person had to get injured from this troop during a time when we're doing combat operations, I'm glad it was me as opposed to anybody else. Nobody wants to see their Soldiers get injured."

"Soldiers," is the simple response Gilliam gives when asked about the most rewarding aspect of returning to Iraq.

"They give you the motivation to get out of bed each day. They surprise you at every turn. They make you proud with the things they have done and make you want to be better," he said. "It's like being back with family."

Gilliam knows his time with this family is limited as he is scheduled to relinquish command of Troop C and take over his squadron's Headquarters Troop soon. That's why he said every day counted so much as he worked to get back to Iraq and his Soldiers.

"The earlier I was able to get back was one more day with these guys before I, unfortunately, hand the guidon to someone else," he explained.

As he enjoys his last few weeks with his Soldiers, Gilliam continues to work with a physical therapist.

While he knows he still has many months of hard and sometimes painful therapy ahead of him, Gilliam said that right now he is just glad to be back, and that if it wasn't for Battisto he might still be in the hospital now or worse.

"I wouldn't be here today if it were not for Spc. Battisto," he said. "It's so hard to express how much that means to me, and how much that means to my wife and my family."

Battisto remains humble about the incident, though, maintaining that any member of his troop would have done the same thing and he just happened to be the one who was there.

"Not only is Capt. Gilliam a great leader, but he's an amazing person and anyone of us in the entire troop would have done that for him," Battisto said. "I was just in the right spot at the right time and did the right thing."

Gilliam, however, does not downplay Battisto's actions that day and does not hesitate to call him a hero.

"Battisto is a hero in every sense of the word, and what he did speaks volumes about the characters of the Soldiers in this troop because he's not unique," Gilliam said. "Anyone of the Soldiers in this troop would have done that, and I don't mean for just me, but for anybody. In my eyes, they're all heroes - all 104 of them."

Artillery Troops Demonstrate Versatility, Aid Community

By Sgt. Robert Yde
2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

BAGHDAD – Since arriving in Iraq nearly seven months ago, the Soldiers of 3rd Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment have performed numerous missions; however, few of them have involved anything traditionally associated with a field artillery battalion.

While the “Red Dragons,” part of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, maintain a small contingent of Soldiers at Forward Operating Base Falcon who do perform fire missions, which are known as “hot guns,” the majority of the battalion has found itself performing duties such as conducting patrols usually associated with infantry Soldiers.

“I think field artillery is kind of getting to be a utility Soldier,” explained Capt. Donald Cherry, the commander of Battery A, 3-82nd FA. “We can do the hot gun piece and shoot the indirect fire, and we’re getting better and better everyday at doing the mounted operations, too.”

Cherry’s Soldiers continued to demonstrate their versatility by assisting Soldiers with the 97th Civil Affairs Battalion, out of Fort Bragg, N.C., with a humanitarian mission in Baghdad’s Qadisiyah neighborhood May 15.

While the majority of Qadisiyah is relatively well off compared to other areas of Baghdad, the area that was targeted for this particular mission was extremely impoverished.

“We’ve been looking at that area. It’s where a lot of our displaced families are living right now,” Cherry explained. “These people kind of moved in after the war - these displaced squatters - and today we’re just trying to build a rapport with them.”

Shortly after the Soldiers’ arrival to the



(Photos by Sgt. Robert Yde, 2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Spc. Roosevelt Geeslin, a medic with 3rd Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, takes the blood pressure of a Qadisiyah resident during a humanitarian mission in the Baghdad neighborhood May 15.

neighborhood, people quickly flocked from their mud huts and makeshift homes and gathered around the Soldiers as they prepared to begin the distribution of hygiene products.

As they entered the distribution area, medics were on-hand to discuss any medical issues that anyone may have been experiencing.

“Today we were seeing mainly allergies and some old, reoccurring injuries that were flaring up – just mainly basic ‘sick call’ stuff is what we’re seeing,” said Spc. Roosevelt Geeslin, a medic with 3-82nd FA.

Geeslin, a native of Galveston Island, Texas, said that while the medics were handing out some basic medical supplies, their mission was mainly to just see what kind of

medical issues are affecting the people in

this area of Qadisiyah.

“We’re trying to get a feel for what’s out here, so that we can bring meds to assist with that and whatever else we can help with,” he explained.

After visiting with the medics, the locals filed through to another line where items such as toothbrushes, toothpaste, soap, lotion, baby wipes and miscellaneous school supplies were handed out.

All of the items were donated to Maj. Gary Spivey, a member of one of the 1st Infantry Division’s National Police Training Teams, from the post chapel at Fort Leavenworth, Kan. He said that after receiving the items, he coordinated with the Civil Affairs team at FOB Union III to set up a humanitarian drop.

“We can’t help them with everything, but if we can help them with one small thing just to make their lives a little bit better than that’s good,” Spivey said, explaining his motivation for wanting to see these donated

items go to some of Baghdad’s neediest residents.

“I enjoy just seeing a smile on their faces,” he added. “Giving them something as simple as a bottle of water, soap, socks or toothpaste – it brings a smile to their faces and that makes it worth it.”

Most of the Soldiers who took part in the mission agreed, saying that just knowing that they are making a difference is a huge reward.

“I’m all for it,” said Pfc. Brian Stoller, a mechanic with 3-82nd FA. “Compared to America, we’re in the third world here and I’m more than happy to help these people out as much as I can. I’m all about the mission.”

Stoller said that while he enjoys being able to get out into the city and interact with the people, it is not what he imagined he would be doing before he left Fort Hood, Texas.

“It’s completely different. In garrison, I worked on vehicles in a maintenance bay, and here I’m on the ground doing pretty much [infantry] work,” the LaCrosse, Ind. native explained. “I like this; I like doing this job, though. I don’t want to be stuck in the FOB working on vehicles the whole deployment. I didn’t come here to do that.”

Stoller noted that he has gained a great deal of experience that will help him throughout his military career, and Cherry said that it’s this is the kind of attitude that most of his Soldiers have demonstrated and it is because of this that their deployment has been successful.

“A lot of the younger guys – especially the E-5’s and below – this is all they’ve really known in the artillery,” Cherry explained. “The whole time that they’ve been in [the Army] we’ve been in OIF. So a lot of them, they’re pretty good whether we’re doing a mounted infantry mission or the artillery mission.”

“They’re starting to build those relationships with the people,” he added, “and the people are starting to recognize them when they come out into sector. I think they’re starting to like that.”



Residents of Qadisiyah line up to get supplies during a humanitarian mission conducted by the 3rd Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, in conjunction with the 97th Civil Affairs Battalion in the Baghdad neighborhood May 15.

'New Guy' in Iraq Adjusts to New Life

By Pfc. Ben Fox
3rd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

KHAN BANI SA'AD, Iraq – Brotherhood – it is a major factor in keeping units together before they deploy so that Soldiers can learn to trust each other. It doesn't always work out that way though.

Pvt. Destry Mulloy is a new Soldier who went to basic training and was then immediately deployed to Iraq.

He shipped out to basic combat training Sept. 28, 2006 and graduated January 26. After spending a short time with the rear detachment at Fort Hood, Texas, Mulloy deployed to Iraq March 2.

Now, Mulloy is trying to fit into a brotherhood that has spent the last eight months in Iraq together, but he tries to look at things with a positive light.

"I had the chance to actually be in the field," said Mulloy. "When I get back I will have a (Combat Infantry Badge) and combat experience, which will be better for promotion points."

His new brothers at the unit treat him like the "new guy" at times, he said, but for the most part they try to help him out.

"You get the natural little bit of jokes because you're the new guy," said Mulloy.

Not only is Mulloy the newest guy to the unit, he is also one of the youngest.

"I turned 18 right before I graduated basic training," he said, as he talked about having to learn many things on his own.

"A lot of the stuff I didn't know, I picked up as I go," he said.

For the most part, though, Mulloy has had help from his leaders as well as his peers.

"Everybody here has experience and they kind of make sure you're not doing something stupid," he said.

Sgt. Patrick Miller, Mulloy's NCO, said, "It's probably pretty tough for him because he came over here and didn't know any of us."

Miller tries to help Mulloy out as much as possible, but also encourages him to learn from his peers.

"I've taught him as much as I can," said Miller.

Mulloy said Miller treats him well and tries to help him out by disciplining him.

"He gets onto me every once in a while... but that's my fault," said Mulloy. "He keeps me squared away."

Miller said he tries to be understanding though that Mulloy doesn't understand everything that goes on yet, and



(Photo by Pfc. Ben Fox, 3rd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Scanning his sector, Pvt. Destry Mulloy, 1-12 Combined Arms Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, pulls guard on the roof of his compound in Khan Bani Sa'ad, Iraq, May 12. Mulloy was deployed to Iraq almost immediately after basic training and has had to quickly adjust to his new life.

that it will take some time before he does.

"I learned so much in those couple of months that I had before I went to Iraq," said Miller. "He didn't really get that time."

Mulloy knew he was first heading over when he arrived at his duty station.

"They officially told me when I got to Hood," said Mulloy, who previously anticipated the deployment before being officially notified.

"I knew I was going to Cav. and Cav. was already over here," he said.

Mulloy said his initial reaction to his hasty deployment was disappointment, but he tries to look at the brighter side now.

"At the moment I thought it sucked, but now I don't regret it," said Mulloy. "I'll have plenty of time to spend

when I get back.

"If I were to stay in garrison, I would've actually known the guys a little better before I came over here," he said.

"It hasn't affected me so far, not knowing the guys when I got here," Mulloy said. "Plus I'm over here getting on the job training."

Mulloy's parents' initial reaction was shock, he said, but they understood that he had to go.

"It surprised them a little bit that I was coming over here so quickly, but they were already adjusted to the fact that I would be going sooner or later," he said.

As for Mulloy, he has accepted his deployment with a sense of duty.

"I joined the Army, and I joined the infantry for a reason," he said. "I knew Iraq was going on, so I knew pretty much that I was coming here."

Soldiers Block Violence between Baghdad, Baqouba

By Pfc. Ben Fox
3rd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

KHAN BANI SA'AD, Iraq - No showers. No toilets. No dining facility. No internet and no phones. There are just cots, a building with a few rooms and a tent out back.

These are the living conditions Soldiers stationed in Khan Bani Sa'ad have to deal with.

Not to mention, of course, the mortar attacks and random gunfire outside the walls. These 1st Cavalry Division Soldiers endure all of these harsh conditions and continue on with their mission to secure the area.

Khan Bani Sa'ad is located between Baghdad and Baqouba, and the surrounding rural areas have had their own share of violence as terrorists flee from the capital and move east.

The 3rd Brigade Combat Team has Soldiers in an outpost in the area in order to



(Photo by Pfc. Ben Fox, 3rd BCT, 1st Cav. Div.)

Pfc. Matthew Taylor (front) and Spc. Daniel Baker, 1-12 Combined Arms Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, relax during a down time at their compound in Khan Bani Sa'ad, Iraq.

quell the violence there and return the area to a state of peaceful existence.

Company C, 1-12 Combined Arms

Battalion, mans the outpost and the Soldiers rotate in and out of the post regularly.

The Soldiers are comprised of infantrymen and tankers, and use these skills in a combined effort to bring stability to the area.

Their jobs are to pull guard throughout the city to keep the insurgent activity down while conducting dismounted patrols to strike terrorists where they are most vulnerable.

"We keep this area safe," said Spc. Daniel Baker, an infantryman from Co. A attached to Co. C. "We go out on patrols and to find as many caches as we can."

"Basically we keep (insurgents) from acting up," he said.

"We are looking for the enemy and taking the fight to them," said Spc. Nicholas Tompkins.

In addition to the coalition effort, the Khan Bani Sa'ad compound is also shared

with Iraqi army soldiers, who often conduct joint patrols with the U.S. forces.

"They go on a lot of missions with us," said Baker. "They are usually the first ones in."

"Our goal would be to... get the IA to take over for us," he said. "We go in behind them to make sure they are doing their job correctly, because we are trying to teach them what we know so we can go home."

Since the unit's arrival, they have seen improvements in the Iraqi soldiers' performance.

"The IA is getting better, they seem a little more organized than when we first started working with them, so obviously they are learning something from us," said Baker.

Despite not having many comforts at the compound, Tompkins said he has to "just suffer through it because one day we will be home with our families and everything will be back to normal."



(Photo by 1st Lt. Matthew Neyland, 2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery Regiment)

An Iraqi Army soldier practices the techniques he just learned for searching a vehicle during a training event with Coalition Forces in Baghdad's International Zone.

U.S. Forces Help Instruct New Iraqi Army Recruits

By 1st Lt Charles Bloomfield
2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery Regiment

BAGHDAD – Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers led a combined training exercise with new Iraqi Army recruits at the Crossed Scimitars monument in the International Zone May 20.

Noncommissioned officers from Battery A, 2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery, in cooperation with the 3rd Battalion, 5th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division's Military Transition Team (MiTT) provided the necessary expertise in training the Iraqi Army recruits by taking them through a series of situational training exercises.

"The training was really great," said Ronks, Pa., native 1st Lt. Neal Rice, the executive officer for Battery A. "Each group (of recruits) had an NCO from Alpha Battery and from the MiTT."

The event lasted for two days and the recruits received training in clearing buildings, vehicle searches, and checkpoint procedures. After seeing the American NCOs properly complete the situational exercise, the recruits followed suit and trained on the exercise.

"The groups were really receptive to the training," Rice said. "Two days after the training, one of the recruits recognized his NCO instructor at a checkpoint. The recruit was proud to demonstrate the techniques he had learned in the days prior."

With continued training like this from Coalition Forces, Iraqi Army Soldiers are gaining more experience and are increasing their proficiency in the technical skills required to defeat any Anti-Iraqi Forces.

"Every time we have an event like this, it shows progress," said San Antonio native 1st Lt. Matthew Neyland, a platoon leader with the battery. "It's great to see the improvements the (Iraqi) soldiers are making. The training is essential."



(Photo by Capt. April Verlo, 299th FSB, 2nd BCT, 1st Inf. Div.)

Spc. George Soliz, from 299th Forward Support Battalion checks the levels of disinfectant and pH in the water at Joint Security Station Bonzai in the Baghdad neighborhood of Mansour. Once back at Camp Liberty, he will test the water for bacteriological contamination.

Preventive Medicine Team Keeps Soldiers Healthy at Combat Outposts

By Capt. April Verlo
299th FSB, 2nd BCT, 1st Inf. Div.

BAGHDAD – The inception of Joint Security Stations (JSS) partnering Coalition units with Iraqi Army and National Police units has created many challenges to Soldiers deployed with the 2nd "Dagger" Brigade of the 1st Infantry Division.

For the Preventive Medicine team consisting of Capt. April Verlo, an Environmental Science Officer and Spc. George Soliz, a Preventive Medicine Technician, each JSS presents its own unique challenges in regards to protecting Soldier health.

The team takes it's expertise on the road several times per week visiting each JSS every four to six weeks to assess things such as food safety and securi-

ty, ensuring both operational and freshly prepared meals are fit for Soldier consumption, performing water quality analysis to ensure water sources used for personal hygiene are safe and performing vector control activities to minimize the threat from insect-borne illnesses. The goal of the PM team is to reduce the number of disease and non-battle injuries, that is, the injuries that don't result from combat operations but can definitely affect immediate Soldier readiness and their health in the future.

When asked what his biggest challenges are supporting troops in the city, Spc. George Soliz states, "each site is different; some are crowded and have poor ventilation, while others might have large mosquito breeding areas that need to be treated. It is a different mission every day to keep us sharp."

"The job of the Soldiers at the JSS's is dangerous enough, and they should be able to come to their 'home' and not have to worry about getting sick on top of getting ready for the next important mission within the city," Verlo said. "They definitely lack some of the luxuries of the larger camps; we owe it to them to go out and help improve their situation as best as we can."

The PM team often brings materials to distribute that help control pests such as flies and mosquitoes, resulting in fewer bug bites and happier Soldiers and leaders alike.

Controlling pests means reducing the likelihood of contamination of fresh food sources and preventing stomach ailments from flies that frequent the many waste disposal sites around the city of Baghdad. Prevention of the transmission of malaria or Leishmaniasis, both vector-borne diseases that can lead to severe illnesses, is paramount in ensuring Soldiers stay healthy and in the fight.



(Photo by Spc. George Soliz, 299th FSB, 2nd BCT, 1st Inf. Div.)

Back at Camp Liberty, Capt. April Verlo prepares a water sample from a shower at JSS Bonzai to send in to the U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine in Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md.



(Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Robert Timmons, 4th IBCT, 1st Inf. Div. Public Affairs)

Bring on the Heat

Cpl. Julian Landrove, 25, from San Antonio, flips a hamburger as Spc. Waylon Ren, 20, of Lebanon, Ky., both with Company C, 610th Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, hands a hot dog to Manhattan, Kan., resident 1st Sgt. Sean Polwort from Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4th IBCT, 1st Inf. Div. The Soldiers were holding a Memorial Day weekend barbecue at Forward Operating Base Falcon May 27.



(U.S. Army Photo)

A policeman with 1st Battalion, 1st Brigade (Mechanized) of the Iraqi National Police, gives a soccer ball to a child in the Al Furat neighborhood of Baghdad, May 19. The Iraqi Security Forces and members of 1st "Black Lions" Battalion, 28th Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Inf. Div., gave soccer balls, clothing and other things to children at two locations in the area.

Policemen Give Gifts to Children

By Sgt. 1st Class Robert Timmons
4th IBCT, 1st Inf. Div. Public Affairs

BAGHDAD – Iraqi Security Forces and Multinational Division-Baghdad troops made children's lives a little better in the Al Furat region of Baghdad by dropping of humanitarian supplies May 19.

Policemen of the 1st Battalion, 1st Brigade (Mechanized) of the Iraqi National Police and the "Black Lions" of 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Inf. Div., dropped off soccer balls, clothing and food to children in front of the council members' office and in a nearby gated community.

"It's nice to be able to provide an opportunity for Coalition Forces, Iraqi National Police and the citizens of Al Furat to have a friendly gathering and bring smiles to the faces of so many impressionable Iraqi children," said Maj. E. E. Smith, 1-1st National Police Transition Team.

The mission is part of the multi-faceted Baghdad security plan and highlights the cooperation between the Iraqis and their Coalition partners.

One Soldier said he saw the event as setting up Iraq's future.

"I was honored to help Iraq's future leaders," said Sgt. 1st Class Jeffery Whitworth, a police transition team member.

Life on the
East B

By Sgt. Mike Pryor
2nd BCT, 82nd Abn. Div.

BAGHDAD – The sky is clear, the breeze is blowing, and Sgt. Matthew Vaughn is playing guitar. He sits on a plastic pallet, strumming a Dave Matthews Band song. The music is so lulling, it's easy to imagine he was some local musician from Muskogee, Okla., playing at a local bar. Then three loud explosions shake the ground. Vaughn pauses, mentally calculating the distance to the source, then resumes playing his guitar. The explosions are a reminder of the danger in Baghdad, less than a half mile from the U.S. military's main militia army. And paratroopers are right in the middle of it.

Coalition Outpost Ford is a small, isolated area in Baghdad's Adhamiyah District. It's a collection of paratroopers from 2nd Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Brigade Combat Team since the invasion. The new Baghdad security zone is called "COP Ford" – meaning "enforcing the law" – and it's the ground in areas through which the paratroopers at COP Ford. "Seeing as how we're not moving as far forward as we can get,"

Our Own Little Castle
The sun was up and it was hot. Sgt. Matthew Vaughn, a Brooklyn, N.Y., was manning the outpost. COP Ford's rooftop guard position was a good vantage point. The streets of Al Beida stretched out below. A woman was on her roof hanging laundry. They were all that separated her from the war.

"This is like our own little castle," Vaughn said. "It's like when people try to describe a city. You get an idea, according to counterintelligence, in order to pacify them."

COP Ford's commander, Sgt. Mike Pryor, was a history major in school. He's been in Iraq throughout the ages.

"This is nothing new. It's just the west," Marshall said.

Marshall, who spent 10 years in the military, is dropping references to 70s rock and roll, his rapport with his Soldiers, and his room vulgarity and big-brass. He sneaks up on his radioman, a young man.

Marshall's leadership style is relaxed. It lacks the rigid formality of a traditional military. It doesn't permit it. There are no salutes and no formalities. The doors are always locked and loaded.

"Out here, we can really relax," Kopach said.

Out at the COP, only the basics. Jason Cabrera, a scout-sniper, says cleaning your weapon is not a chore. It's the grungy, battle-hardened way of life. heartedly.

The COP strategy has been successful. It's vulnerable to attack than other units. His troops can take whatever they want.

"I sleep very good at night. I don't see anyone on the roof who can hit anyone."

They Feel Safer With Us
The community of Al Beida feels it comes right over them. A



Sgt. Patrick Donlan (left), of a team leader with Company B, 2nd Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment from Canaioharie, N.Y., and Phoenix native Spc. David Higuera, a medic, search a house in the Al Beida neighborhood in Baghdad's Adhamiyah District April 26.



Phoenix native Spc. David Higuera, a medic with Company B, 2nd Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, examines the x-rays of a man with a fractured leg when Higuera's platoon paid a friendly visit to the man's house in the Al Beida neighborhood of Baghdad's Adhamiyah District April 22.



Dallas native Sgt. Matthew Vaughn, a paratrooper with Company B, 2nd Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, directs a civilian while searching a car that was suspected of having explosives inside in the Al Beida neighborhood in Baghdad's Adhamiyah District April 25.

(Photos by Sgt. Mike Pryor, 2nd BCT, 82nd Abn. Div. Public Affairs)

e Frontier

Baghdad Coalition Outpost Home to Paratroopers

v. Public Affairs

y has turned purple in the twilight, a gentle . Adam Farmer has come outside to play his patio chair, a ball cap pulled low over his eyes, vs song.

g, the warm breeze so pleasant, it would be neplace else. Maybe back in his hometown of songs on the front porch.

sions rip through the evening calm. Farmer s the distance of the blasts, and goes back to

reminder: this isn't anywhere else. This is East mile from Sadr City, the heart of the Shi'ite opers from the 82nd Airborne Division are

d, located in the Al Beida neighborhood of stict, has been home to a company of para-on, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, 2nd ce late February.

urity plan, dubbed Fardh Al-Qanoon in Arabic aw," has put thousands more U.S. Soldiers on out the city, but few are as far forward as the

surrounded on all sides, I'd say we're about said 1st Lt. Paul Benfield, of Old Town, Fla. le

t was starting to bake. Sgt. Ilya Kopach, of ng a .50-caliber machine gun on one of COP ons. Beyond Kopach's bunker, the maze-like ed out into the horizon. Not 25 yards away, a anging laundry. Twelve-foot-high blast walls house from the COP.

little castle," Kopach said.

one of the more common ones that come up e the experience of a coalition outpost. The nsurgency theory, is to live among the people

er, Capt. Dennis Marshall, of Hinckley, Ohio, ool. He can site precursors to the COP from

Hadrian did it. The U.S. did it all throughout

2 years as an enlisted Soldier before receiv-comfortable telling off-color anecdotes as he

th century Roman emperors. He has an easy who he speaks to with a mixture of locker-rotherly affection. A couple times a day, he a and shouts into his ear, startling the young

style seems a perfect fit for COP Ford, which f other larger base camps. The circumstances o showers, no hot chow and no laundry, but parade-ground politesse, either. Weapons are It is a place where a grunt can feel at home. lly focus on what we're supposed to do," said

the essentials are important, said Staff Sgt. per from Orlando, Fla. What matters is how how clean your uniform is. It's a philosophy d troops at COP Ford have embraced whole-

s risks. COP Ford's isolation makes it more ther bases. But Marshall said he is confident er the enemy throws at them.

ight, because I know there's a paratrooper up ything he aims at," he said.

a Us Here

Beida doesn't just stop at COP Ford's walls, American music the paratroopers play inside

is often drowned out by the call to prayer emanating from a nearby mosque.

Every day brings hundreds of interactions between the U.S. forces and the local community; from brief hellos to two-hour long lunches. And each one is important to the paratroopers' mission.

"You've got to have the people by your side," said Spc. David Higuera, of Phoenix.

Living in such close proximity has allowed the paratroopers to establish relationships and build trust. They know the people in the area. They know the old man who puts his chair out against the wall of the local girl's school and sits there all day. They know the shop owner who went to medical school. They know the woman who keeps a picture of the Virgin Mary on her living room wall, even though she's a Muslim.

That knowledge, they hope, will eventually help them defeat the enemy.

"If you say, 'Hey, let's go patrol this area,' no one is going to tell you anything that day. It's when you've patrolled it every day for three weeks that you start to get information," said Benfield.

It is a challenge for the paratroopers, who are trained to seize air-fields, not police neighborhoods.

One afternoon, Benfield's platoon was sent to the house of a young married couple who were complaining about threats from their neighbors. The grass in the yard was trimmed and green. There was a swing set and a slide for the couple's little children. Benfield talked to the couple at their kitchen table, next to a half-eaten plate of cucumbers. The suburban normalcy of it all seemed strange. Benfield promised them he would look into the problem.

The paratroopers say they are starting to see the results of the strategy.

"People tell us, 'I let my kids play out in the street now.' They feel safer with us here," said Spc. Christian Tobler, of Sachse, Texas.

Tit for Tat

Across Baghdad, U.S. Soldiers have been tasked with enforcing the law and improving local security. In some cases, that means going after Sunni rejectionists or foreign Jihadists. In Al Beida, it means cracking down on militia groups, who control the area like mob bosses. They even have mafia-like names: "Mustafa the Fat," "Adel the Barber" and "Kahtan the Butcher."

"They're just thugs, basically," said 1st Lt. Larry Graham, of Springfield, Mo., the company's fire support officer. "But they start small and they get involved in bigger things."

Graham said the militias have a hand in criminal activity ranging from dealing black market gasoline to importing sophisticated bombs from Iran. Al Beida's still-fledgling police force means the paratroopers are the only security force in the area that can effectively oppose the militias.

"Our message is, we don't care if you're Sunni or Shia or Kurd, if you violate the law, there's a penalty for that," Graham said.

At first, people in the community were afraid to come forward with information about the militia's criminal activities, but that has started to change, said Graham.

The confidential tip line card the paratroopers hand out on patrols has been a big part of that. Sgt. Fred Kuebrich. Kuebrich, an intelligence specialist from Hauppauge, N.Y., is the one who answers the calls that come in. His cell phone rings constantly.

One afternoon, he got a call from a particularly frantic informant. Kuebrich passed the phone to his Moroccan interpreter, Jamila. Jamila was wearing lipstick and eye shadow along with her body armor. Jewelry came spilling out of her uniform as she leaned over to talk. The tipper told her an attack was being planned on the COP.

"Three cars, seven guys," Jamila scribbled in a notepad.

"What time?" bellowed Marshall, who was hovering behind her.

"That's what I'm trying to find out," she snapped back at him.

That attack never materialized, but others have. The COP has received mortar, rocket and small arms fire. One day a man pushed a fruit cart up to the gate with a rocket hidden inside it and fired it at the guard bunker.

In a way, the attacks mean the paratroopers are achieving success. If they weren't a threat to the militia's dominance in the area, there would be no reason to attack them.

"It's tit for tat," said Benfield. "The more we do that's good, the

more they're going to respond."

On the Offensive

Despite the attacks, there is no siege mentality at COP Ford. In the paratroopers' way of thinking, a good offense is the best defense.

"We could sit here and wait for them to attack us, or we could go out and take them off the streets," said Spc. Zachry King, of Jacksonville, Fla. "What do you think we're going to do?"

Using the tips they get from people in the neighborhood and information they pick up during their day patrols, the paratroopers spend their nights conducting hard-hitting operations against criminals in Al Beida.

An operation the paratroopers mounted April 26 was a typical example. The plan was to conduct a quick succession of raids against militia leaders in six different houses. All the targets had previously fought against coalition forces in Sadr City.

The mission began at two in the morning. Marshall sent one mounted platoon, led by 1st Lt. Derrick Syed, from Jersey City, N.J., to hit the farthest of the first three targets. He accompanied Benfield's platoon on foot to hit the other two. The raids were supposed to go off simultaneously.

The dismounted element left first. The paratroopers walked out of the gates, moving silently through the ghostly streets until they arrived at the objective. The targets lived only houses apart, on opposite sides of the road. Benfield split the platoon in two. The team led by platoon sergeant Sgt. 1st Class Thomas Applegate took the house on the left. They used bolt cutters to breach the first gate. Inside the courtyard, they found a second, sturdier door.

"Shotgun breach." The words were passed back in a whisper.

Seconds later - BLAM! - the shotgun blew a hole around the door, and the paratroopers swarmed inside. Minutes later the house was secure. They put the suspects they detained in the living room and began searching for evidence.

Just across the street, Benfield had led his team into the other target house and took two other suspects into custody.

As the suspects were being taken out and loaded into humvees, there was a huge explosion, followed by the RAT-TAT-TAT of gunfire.

"Get the detainees back inside!" shouted Marshall.

The paratroopers pushed them back into the kitchen. Marshall yanked his radio operator into the garden, trying to get a situation report from his other platoon. No one knew where the fire was coming from. Syed's platoon was only a few blocks away.

"Delta-Two-Six, are you engaged?" Marshall asked him over the radio.

"I don't know, but there are a lot of bullets flying around," Syed replied.

Sgt. William Kok, of Sacramento, Calif., sprinted upstairs to set up a fighting position for his team on the roof.

"Hell yeah!" he exclaimed, taking the steps two at a time. He was ready for a fight.

Outside, Sgt. Joshua Dover, of Phoenix, took cover behind a car parked on the side of the road. The gunfire seemed to be rolling towards him.

"Sounds like it's coming this way," he said, sighting his M-4 down the street.

Then, just as quickly as it began, it was over. The explosions turned out to be coming from a coordinated ambush on an Iraqi Army unit traveling parallel to the two U.S. platoons. The Iraqi troops had fought through it and continued moving.

Calm returned. Noncommissioned officers went around checking their personnel, coming out of the darkness to put a hand on their shoulder.

"You up?" they asked.

As soon as everyone was accounted for, the platoon picked up and moved out. They still had two houses to hit before the night was over.

By daybreak, it was all finished. The final tally of the raids was nine detainees, an assortment of weapons and several huge trash bags full of hard drives, computer discs, and other evidence. Back at Ford, the paratroopers worked until mid-morning processing it all.

Finally, it was done, and the weary paratroopers dragged themselves off to bed. The COP was quiet.

Out on the patio, a single person was stirring. It was Farmer, quietly plucking his guitar strings, dreaming of Muskogee.

Apache Crews Keep Eyes on Mission

By Sgt. 1st Class Rick Emert
1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Many a Soldier has seen an AH-64D Apache fly overhead and wished they had had that guy's recruiter.

As Army jobs go, helicopter pilot ranks right up there with astronaut on the cool-job scale. But, ask an Apache pilot what the highlight of his days in Iraq are, and it's not the Apache's firepower or even flying that gets them juiced.

"Ultimately, we support the ground guys. If they need our support, that's our top priority," said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Terry Eldridge, an Apache and maintenance test pilot from Company B, 1st Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division.

"That is the most satisfying thing that we do – going out and supporting the ground forces," echoed Chief Warrant Officer 2 Daryl Hosler, Apache pilot and aviation life support equipment officer for Company B, 1-227th, from Placerville, Calif.

While responding to troops in contact with the enemy may be the money mission for the pilots, they perform a wide range of essential missions in the Multi-National Division - Baghdad area, including reconnaissance, VIP flight escorts, convoy escorts and presence missions.

No matter what the mission, their time in the air is not exactly soothing.

"There is a lot of information to



(Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Rick Emert, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Chief Warrant Officer 3 Sebastien Cosyns, an Apache pilot, does a pre-flight inspection on an aircraft May 16 at Camp Taji, Iraq. Cosyns is assigned to Company B, 1st Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment.

process," said Eldridge, who hails from Lexington, Okla. "It's pretty stressful. We have to constantly consider air traffic avoidance and obstacle avoidance."

Additionally, the crews have to monitor four different radio systems, including frequencies from other divisions in the busy skies over Iraq, according to 1st Lt. Thomas Loux, an Apache pilot and platoon leader.

"From where we are at in the air, we can get shot at from anywhere," Hosler said.

"The ground guys are seeing action day in and day out," said Chief Warrant Officer 3

Sebastien Cosyns, an Apache pilot and instructor pilot from Tucson, Ariz. "From our perspective – in the air – if we get hit, we may be coming down. You try not to think about that."

Before the flight however, the risks involved get a lot of thought – and are included in the mission planning.

"We assess the risk before we start any mission," Eldridge said. "You'll know that this mission or that mission has a higher risk before you even begin."

Unlike the ground forces who interact

with Iraqis every day, the Apache pilots have only a birds-eye view of what life is like for the people of Baghdad.

"I've spent most of my deployments in Baghdad," Eldridge said. "There's a big difference between now and (Operation Iraqi Freedom I) in the areas that we will fly over without hesitating. Some of those areas we could not fly over in previous deployments. I don't want to say if it's better or worse here now. That's not for me to determine."

"In some areas, I see people waving at us as we fly over; in other areas, they throw rocks," said Loux, a native of Fort Myers, Fla.

While the pilots can't give an assessment of the security situation from their view of Baghdad, they do have opinions on the portrayal of Iraq in the news.

"I stopped watching the news after news reports of a mission I had been involved in were completely different than what happened," Hosler said.

"Everything I do is to support the Soldier next to me," Eldridge said. "On the news, things are very one-sided. The Soldiers over here who are making a difference – with things like purifying the drinking water – don't sell newspapers. Instead, the headlines are about the latest Al Qaeda video."

The pilots don't spend a lot of time thinking about the politics of Iraq, focusing instead on their top mission priority.

"I remind myself of why we are here – to support the ground guys," Loux said. "We work for them."

Cav Pilot Selected as One of Few Experimental Test Pilots

By Spc. Nathan Hoskins
1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Before any new military aircraft makes it into the hands of pilots in the armed forces, someone gets to play with them first ... to check their airworthiness.

These pilots get to take brand new aircraft and push them to their physical and technological limits. These are experimental test pilots and they are a rare breed.

Yet, with the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division's illustrious reputation, it's no surprise that the U.S. Naval Test Pilot School has selected one of the unit's pilots to take on the challenge of pushing the limits of aviation.

Fulfilling his life-long dream, Capt. Marc Dalziel, a CH-47 Chinook pilot and commander of Company B, 2nd Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, is one of only a handful of pilots selected from the Army for this program.

"I don't know how many (pilots) applied," he said with quiet reserve, "but I hear it's pretty competitive."

The selection process occurs every year, and – since this was a life-long dream of Dalziel's – he decided to finally submit a packet.

"It was helpful to have a lot of flight time, which I'm pretty fortunate to have, and then it's helpful to be a Chinook pilot as well as a maintenance test pilot, which I've had the chance to do also," said the Portland, Ore., native.

The USNTPS is a school located in Patuxent River, Md., where seasoned pilots from all over the armed forces go to take new aircraft, fly them, and set the operating parameters for future pilots, said Dalziel.

"The technical manuals are written by experimental test pilots. They set up the operating limitations for the aircraft," he said. "The other aspect of it is the electronics. If (the



(Photo by Spc. Nathan Hoskins, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Portland, Ore., native Capt. Marc Dalziel, commander and CH-47 Chinook pilot for Company B, 2nd Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, stands in front of one of his helicopters at Camp Taji, Iraq.

equipment) has been plugged into an aircraft, it's been tested by an experimental test pilot."

Not only do the experimental test pilots have to push the limits in clear, blue skies, they also have to traverse through dangerous weather conditions, said Dalziel.

"There are a couple programs where they do the flying in icing conditions," he said. "Just like pushing the limits on the engines, they're going to push the limits on the rotors and things like that."

Being selected for the program is not as easy as just heading to the school when the next class starts; Dalziel has a lot to accomplish before his class in February 2010.

For starters, he has to complete a graduate course in a program of his choice. He hasn't yet decided what he'll get a

master's degree in, but he is diligently looking, he said.

After he finishes his graduate studies, he then has to attend the Intermediate Level Education course. This is a course designed for officers promoted to the rank of major, said Dalziel.

With a graduate degree and ILE out of the way, he's ready for the USNTPS, right?

Not so fast.

After all of that, Dalziel still has to attend the fixed-wing multi-engine aircraft course at Fort Rucker, Ala. Then he'll be ready for the USNTPS.

This seems like a lot, but this pilot is ready for the challenge and the honor bestowed upon him, he said.

"It's kind of like following in the footsteps of a lot of other people who have been really great pilots," said Dalziel. "A lot of the guys who are in the Army astronaut program end up walking this same path. A lot of Army astronauts have gone through the experimental test pilot program on their way to becoming astronauts."

"If the opportunity presents itself to (become an astronaut), I'll take it, but I'd really like to just do the best I can otherwise," said Dalziel.

Although Dalziel has a lot of experience in the pilot seat of a Chinook, the twin rotor helicopters used for heavy lifting throughout the Army, he has yet to fly a fixed-wing aircraft, let alone a jet, he said.

"Flying jets is part of the course. I'm really excited to do that ... it'll be a lot of fun. It's like a childhood, second-grader kind of dream," said Dalziel with a big grin.

Although being selected for such a program would inflate most Soldiers' egos, Dalziel is grateful and humbled to have been chosen, he said.

"I know I'm in a really elite crowd of people and I'm just kind of really happy to be there," he said modestly.

“An Army of Ron”

Air Cavalry Crew Chief Stays Busy in Baghdad Skies

**By Spc. Nathan Hoskins
1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs**

CAMP TAJI, Iraq –Sgt. Ron Scheuren gets to fly nearly every day at work, but this 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division Soldier isn't Superman.

A native of Cisco, Texas, Scheuren flies over Baghdad almost every day as a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter crew chief for Company B, 3rd “Spearhead” Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment. As a crew chief, he's responsible for the passengers' and aircraft's protection while flying. He's also responsible for maintaining the Black Hawk while it's not in flight, said Scheuren.

“(Crew chiefs) are not in an office; we're on the flight line all day long. If we're not on the flight line, we're flying. If we're not flying, we're fixing the aircraft,” he said.

Before the crew chiefs go out to fly a

mission, they first do a pre-flight check of the aircraft to ensure it is functioning properly. Then they load it up with supplies needed for the mission, said Scheuren.

In the skies over Baghdad, Scheuren and his aircrew is all business, but a quick look at the back of his flight helmet shows he's got a sense of humor, even in a combat zone. He bears the U.S. Army's logo on it, but he's proclaiming himself as “An Army of Ron,” poking fun at the Army's recruiting slogan before it became “Army Strong.”

After a mission is completed and the flight helmet comes off, Scheuren and his fellow crew chiefs have to perform scheduled maintenance on the aircraft along with any other issues that might have come up during flight, he said.

This daily routine leaves little time to do much else other than eat and sleep, he said.

“When I get off work, I call my wife, shower, grab something to eat and then it's to bed,” he said. “You have a little chill time (to) read, play games (and) catch up on the news. Then it's starting all over again.”

On a normal day, Scheuren helps fly troops across the battle space so that they can get around quickly and safely, he said.

“(Transporting Soldiers) keeps people off the ground where they're getting hurt. So if you can put them in an aircraft, that just increases their chances of getting from point A to point B,” he said.

This happily married father of one knows the risks inherent in being a crew chief, but doesn't let himself think about them very often, he said.

“You put (the risk factor) in the back of



(Photos by Spc. Nathan Hoskins, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Cisco, Texas native Sgt. Ron Scheuren, a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter crew chief for Company B, 3rd “Spearhead” Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, watches the rotors of the aircraft as it begins to start up to ensure there are no malfunctions before a mission departing from Camp Taji, Iraq.

your mind. You don't talk about it. You know it's out there, but you don't bring it up,” said Scheuren. “Just like everybody else out here, you go do the job you're assigned to do.”

Recently Scheuren took part in missions supporting the search for three missing 10th Mountain Division Soldiers.

“This kind of (mission) is the (mission) every crew chief wants to do. It's direct support of an on-going mission – there's not a single crew chief that objects to doing this,”

said Scheuren.

Scheuren is looking forward to going home after the deployment and spending time with his family and maybe getting in some hunting, he said. But for now, Scheuren is flying high over the skies of Baghdad – making sure his aircraft gets his passengers safely to their final destinations.

“(Being a crew chief) is a great gig,” he said. “It's non-stop and it's something different everyday.”



Playing off the former Army recruiting slogan, Cisco, Texas native Sgt. Ron Scheuren wears a humorous “Army of Ron” patch while on missions over Baghdad.

Warriors, Commandos Continue Search for Missing Soldiers

Search

From Page 1

search for the missing Soldiers, said Glasgow, Mont., native Capt. Pat Patrino, a UH-60 Black Hawk pilot and commander of Company B, 3rd “Spearhead” Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment.

“We're doing raids on targets, insertions, extractions, re-supplies, emergency re-supplies, troop movement ... pretty much anything they ask for that we can do we'll do, to include sling-loads,” he said.

The Commando Soldiers behind getting the supplies ready for 1st ACB to transport are from Company A, 210th Brigade Support Battalion.

They understand that working quickly and effectively with their aerial partners is critical to keeping the mission going, said Capt. Anita Trepanier, commander of Company A, 210th BSB.

“Our mission, right now, is to support the troops that are on the ground trying to find our fellow comrades with logistics support,” she said. “We have come together as a team to support our fellow Soldiers forward.”

Along with ammunition, medical supplies, food, and water, the Warriors are also transporting boats which aide the troops having to search in and around the canals, said Clinton, Mass., native 1st Sgt. Todd Harger, the senior noncommissioned officer for Co. A.

“We've pushed boats, so they can cross rivers and



(Photo by Spc. Nathan Hoskins, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

A UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter from 3rd “Spearhead” Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, sets out on a mission in support of the search for the three missing Soldiers.

search the canals,” he said. “Those canals, they don't look deep, but they're very deep. In some cases, 10- to 12-feet deep.”

As supplies are flown out to the troops on the ground,

the troops on the ground are also transported quickly to search areas or capture insurgents during hasty air assaults, said Patrino.

“It's very hasty planning. They give us some products and we go execute it as best we can. Things change on the fly,” he said. “A normal air assault would be anywhere between 48 and 96 hours to plan; these are anywhere between the one to six hours range in terms of from planning to execution.”

With all these missions, the Spearhead crews know the extra work hours are for a worthy cause, said Patrino.

“All the guys in the company actually want to be on the team that is supporting this operation,” he said. “They feel like they're directly supporting the cause.”

These missions are all done on top of their normal work load, Patrino added.

“The guys have all gotten together and they've all put in real long hours and have been flying their butts off. They haven't complained or anything because there's a tangible goal ... to recover those missing Soldiers,” he said.

Trepanier said she hopes the missions continue until the Soldiers are brought back.

“It says it in the Warrior Ethos, we will never leave a fallen comrade, and we are not going to leave our fellow Commandos,” she said.

“There are three missing Soldiers out there that we're trying to find,” Patrino said, “and we're trying to do anything we can to help.”



(Photo by 2nd Lt. Ryan Wood, 2nd Battalion, 16th Infantry Regiment)

Pfc. Ryan Estrada, a medic with Company A, 2nd Battalion, 16th Infantry Regiment, uses the "Jaws of Life" to remove a door from a burned-out training vehicle. Soldiers practiced fire rescue, and vehicle extraction with the Rustamiyah Fire Department May 18.

Feeling the Heat: **Medics Trained in Fire Rescues**

**By 2nd Lt. Ryan Wood
2nd Battalion, 16th Infantry Regiment**

FORWARD OPERATING BASE RUSTAMIYAH, Iraq - Flames jump from the engine of a stricken van as the windshield turns black and shatters in the heat.

Sgt. Alfredo Garza of San Antonio, a medic with 2nd Battalion, 16th Infantry Regiment, rushes to the blazing vehicle, extinguisher in hand, and flings open the door. The initial blast of heat surrounds him, but getting to the injured person overrides any fear. With a hiss, the extinguisher knocks down the flames.

A firefighter standing next to the door nods, congratulates the Soldier and then throws more paper and wood onto the fire.

This is not the story of firefighters gone bad, but of a day of training not usually seen in Iraq. Medics from the 2-16th and the 2nd Brigade Support Battalion gathered to improve their skills in vehicle fire suppression, patient extraction and mechanical extraction with the Rustamiyah Fire Department May 18.

Using an abandoned van, the Soldiers practiced proper techniques for approaching and defeating vehicle fires. Later, they worked with a combat vehicle to practice extracting patients from combat-damaged vehicles.

"With the threats that we face outside the wire," Garza said, "we are encountering most of our injuries in vehicles. This training improves our ability to react to the situations instinctively."

According to Garza, who is the noncommissioned officer in charge of the 2-16th's Evacuation Squad, training troops to handle vehicle fires and extractions is a

necessity.

"This sort of training allows us to balance speed with necessity. We can better fight the fire, immobilize the patient and extract them from the vehicle as a team," he said. "We have improved our skills and thereby improved the care and protection we can offer our Soldiers."

In one of the scenarios, Soldiers work under a blazing sun in 107-degree weather to extract two patients from a humvee. The radios, tight seating, and piles of ammunition and gear work against the Soldiers, but with the training provided by the paramedics, the Soldiers were able to cut minutes off the extraction time while moving the patients in a safer manner.

Spc. Kisha Rasheeda Lloyd of Fort Valley, Ga., a medic with the 2nd BSB, saw immediate value in the training, as it pertained to receiving injured patients at the Rustamiyah Aid Station.

"There have been a lot of times," she said, "when a patient rolled up to the hospital in a combat vehicle and I thought, 'Wow, how are we going to get this person out without causing more injuries?' Now we have the skills."

To cap the event, firefighters broke out the fire hoses, air tanks, and hydraulic tools and trained the Soldiers in mechanical vehicle extractions.

Along with the "Jaws of Life," the medics used hydraulic hammers, steel cutters, saws and other tools to access the training vehicle from all points.

"Putting on the gear, knocking down the fire with the fire hose, tearing the vehicle up, it was like being on TV," Lloyd said. "And we still got the skills needed to help people out."



(Photo by Maj. Sean Ryan, 2nd IBCT, 2nd Inf. Div. Public Affairs Officer)

Iraqis Making Progress on Historic Street

Local workers continue their progress on Abu Nuwas Street as most of the fish restaurants are totally being rebuilt. Ambassador Daniel Speckhard, deputy chief of mission, U.S. Embassy Baghdad, and Brig. Gen. Vincent K. Brooks, Multi-National Division - Baghdad's deputy commanding general for support, were viewing the revitalization projects in the historic district and speaking with local owners on how to better facilitate the progress in eastern Baghdad May 26. The project hopes to restore the historic district back to its former prominence and aid the economic growth of the community.

School Receives Supplies, Toys and Medical Attention

By Maj. Sean Ryan
2nd IBCT, 2nd Inf. Div. Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE LOY-ALTY, Iraq – A hero's welcome was given by the students of Al Toma Elementary School in eastern Baghdad to the Soldiers of the 3rd Tank Battalion, 1st Brigade, 9th Iraqi Army Division and their Military Training Team. These Soldiers, combined with troops from 2nd Battalion, 16th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, partnered up to give back to the community.

The partnership units provided school supplies, water, toys and medical support to the faculty and students May 14.

The goal of Operation Toma was to provide much-needed support to build better rapport with the students and the neighborhood, according to the tank battalion commander. This was the first time Al Toma Elementary has received support, but the third in the partnership between 3-1-9th Iraqi Army and Coalition Forces.

The commander, the proponent for the support drive and an Iraqi Soldier for 21 years, said he feels residents in the neighborhood support the Iraqi Army, but he said he must continue building enduring relationships. Also, he said, by supporting the school and providing supplies, it helps the neighborhood.

The staff and students were very excited to see the Soldiers. The students lined up to receive the supplies off the truck and take them into the school. After the supplies were delivered, each classroom was visited.



(Photo by Maj. Sean Ryan, 2nd IBCT, 2nd Inf. Div. Public Affairs Officer)

The students at Al Tora Elementary School in eastern Baghdad stand in line to bring water into the school. Iraqi troops from the 3rd Tank Battalion, 1st Brigade, 9th Iraqi Army Division and their Military Transition Team paid a visit to the school to donate school supplies, water, toys and medical support May 14.

Photos with the Iraqi commander and students were taken while 'Beanie Babies' were handed out.

Approximately 500 stuffed animals were handed out to appreciative students according to Sgt. 1st Class Dana Lescoe of Fort Riley, Kan. Lescoe gets contacted by agencies wanting to support the mission, and for this operation, a Boy Scout Troop from Buda, Ill., provided the toys.

Lescoe said the units have previously donated soccer balls and candy. He said the

next task is to donate clothes received from agencies and churches.

"This is a work in progress," Lescoe said, "but believe this is the way to win, helping the people".

The faculty and staff were also given medical attention by Iraqi and Coalition medics. Around 25 people were seen.

"We saw everything from aches and pains to stomach ailments," said Staff Sgt. Michael Baxter, a reserve medic from Tumwater, Wash. A few people were

referred to local hospitals, but everyone received an assessment. Baxter said both he and the Iraqi medic would make a diagnosis, and then discuss it, establishing a rapport.

Although the items and medical support was graciously accepted, the headmaster of the school said they are in need of everything. The school does not have a generator, which means there is no power. She added that without electricity the ceiling fans in the classrooms can't be used, even as temperatures climb into triple digits.

In addition, the headmaster said, necessities like paper, pencils and pens that are scarce. She said the lack of a copier hampers progress because instead of photocopying tests, the instructors have to either write the questions on the board or write out a test for each student. This is another reason why a steady electricity source, like a generator she said, is so critical to success.

The only thing the school is not short on is enthusiasm, as the students welcomed their pictures being taken and enjoyed the instant gratification of seeing the results on the digital screen.

Overall, progress in the eastern Baghdad neighborhoods is making a difference, but this takes coordination and time according to MiTT member, Capt. Thad Thome.

The Rapid City, S.D., native said to advise Iraqi forces properly, he has to meet with them almost daily, but they are making great strides.

Thome said by procuring items like generators for the residents and missions like this one - donating items to schools - helps create lasting relationships.

Medics Give Iraqis National Police Lifesaving Skills

By 2nd Lt. Ryan Wood
2nd Battalion, 16th Infantry Regiment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE RUSTAMIYAH, Iraq - There is more to the fight for Iraq than just bullets and bombs, politics and pundits. There is a much smaller fight being waged which could be the most important aspect of this conflict: the fight for understanding and trust.

The medics of 2nd Battalion, 16th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, took up the challenge and gave a day of combat medic training to 12 members of the 1st Battalion, 4th Brigade, 1st Iraqi National Police Division.

While medical training for Iraqi forces is ongoing throughout the country, the chance to train on a forward operating base using the equipment and expertise of a clinic staff is relatively rare. For most of the Iraqi policemen in attendance, this was their first time on an American FOB.

Sgt. 1st Class Thomas Hall of Centennial, Colo., a 2-16th medical platoon sergeant and Spc. David Corey of Maple Heights, Ohio, a medic with the battalion, conducted the training with assistance from interpreters and the 1-4-1st's National Police Transition Team. Skills learned included wound care, fractures, sucking chest wounds and basic patient assessment.

According to Corey, the Iraqis seemed apprehensive and quiet when they first arrived on the FOB, but opened up as the training progressed.

"I think that when they saw that we were willing to put that much work and effort into making them better that the trust started to grow," Corey said.

"The (Iraqi National Police) battalion only has two



(Photo by Spc. David Corey, 2nd Battalion, 16th Infantry Regiment)

2nd Lt. Ryan Wood, a medical officer with 2nd Battalion, 16th Infantry Regiment, receives treatment from members of the 1st Battalion, 4th Brigade, 1st Iraqi National Police Division, during a day of medical training.

medics right now," said Capt. Woodrow Pengally, operations officer for the 1-4-1st NPTT and native of Portland, Ore. "By getting skills down the chain, the individual soldiers can do much more en route to assist the medics."

More than just learning new skills, the Iraqi National Police enjoyed being able to work alongside their U.S. medic counterparts to improve their skills, Pengally said.

The training began with patient evaluation and then moved through basic wound care, splinting, tourniquets and sucking chest wounds. As the training progressed, the Iraqis

became more and more animated and involved, asking questions and requesting affirmation of all of the skills they were being taught.

Miami native Master Sgt. Donald Marshal II, the medical noncommissioned officer-in-charge with the 1-4-1st NPTT, saw the training as a big first step in bringing the unit closer the combat independence.

"Now they need to teach it and train it down to the regular Soldiers back in their units," Marshal said. "This allows them to come up with the diagnosis instead of relying on me."

The training was capped off with two Soldiers being dressed with fake blood and wounds, and then treated by the National Police.

Working as a team, the policemen approached their assigned patient and evaluated and treated the wounds under the watchful eyes of their trainers.

"It was like night and day with these guys," said Corey. "They worked together, treated the wounds and rely showed they had paid attention. It was great."

The day ended with each participant receiving a certificate of achievement and a small first aid kit. A translator told the instructors that medical supplies, even small, simple dressings, were very hard to come by, and the gift was much appreciated.

With smiles and waves the Iraqi National Police left the class a different group. Friendships had been forged and a better understanding and trust had been fostered between the two groups.

"The National Police hold the U.S. Military in very high regard," said Pengally. "Giving them a chance to work with us on an equal footing is a moment of pride."

Troops Earning, Maintaining Trust of Iraqi Residents

By Sgt. Mike Pryor
2nd BCT, 82nd Abn. Div. Public Affairs

BAGHDAD – It's the usual happy chaos when 1st Lt. Josh Rowan arrives at neighborhood advisory council member Abu Muhanned's house for their weekly meeting – children running amuck in the yard, women crowded into the kitchen, and Muhanned standing in the doorway in pajamas and bare feet, a cigarette in one hand, jabbering into his cell phone.

He greets Rowan warmly and ushers him and his Soldiers inside his home nestled in eastern Baghdad's Adhamiyah District. While a security team sets up on the roof, Rowan and Muhanned move to the living room to talk. By now, it's a familiar routine.

It should be.

Muhanned's house was the destination of Rowan's very first patrol in Iraq, almost four months ago, and they have met regularly ever since to plan development projects for the area.

Today, however, will be Rowan's last visit. Rowan, a platoon leader with 2nd Battalion, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment, from College Station, Texas, is moving to a different job. The purpose of this final meeting was to introduce Muhanned to his replacement, 1st Lt. Jeremy Tillman, of Walnut Ridge, Ark.

"All I'm here to do is introduce Tillman and close the loop," Rowan said.

In the Army, the only constant is change. Soldiers are always moving from one position to another and taking over different duties. But in Iraq, the challenge for new leaders like Tillman is, how do you take over a relationship? Rowan and Muhanned worked successfully together because they had a strong personal bond. Tillman will



(Photo by Sgt. Mike Pryor, 2nd BCT, 82nd Abn. Div. Public Affairs)

1st Lt. Jeremy Tillman, a new platoon leader with Battery B, 2nd Battalion, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, gathers information from a local shopkeeper during a night patrol through a neighborhood in Baghdad's Adhamiyah District May 20.

have to build that trust all over again.

"That's the challenge of counter-insurgency warfare," Rowan said.

"It's difficult," agreed Tillman. "It's really just about the individual person's personality."

Over tea and cigarettes at Muhanned's house, Rowan made a big show of introducing Tillman.

"Sir, I look forward to working with you," Tillman told Muhanned, when Rowan was done.

"I will put my hand in your hand. You will protect me, and I will protect you," Muhanned replied.

The meeting continued for almost two hours, with conversation bouncing from topic to topic. One minute they were talking about putting trash cans on the street corners,

the next minute about a trip Muhanned's son was planning and the next about security threats in the area. In between, Muhanned's wife served a huge lunch.

When the meeting was over, Tillman said it had been an eye-opening experience. At his previous unit, the focus had been almost entirely on raids and kinetic operations. Tillman could only remember a few times when he had actually sat in an Iraqi's house and talked.

"Here, they're interacting. They're constantly getting out there and talking to local leaders," Tillman said. "The mindset is just totally different."

Since the 2-319th took over its section of Baghdad in February, the paratroopers have adhered to classic counter-insurgency theory, balancing military operations with

efforts to engage local leaders, build the economy, and improve essential services. Rowan said the strategy, though slow and difficult to measure, is showing results.

"People are moving here from other parts of Baghdad because they say this is a safe place," he told his platoon members just before his last patrol with them. "It's the little things that we are doing that are making a difference."

In the end, it all boils down to personal relationships, said Capt. Jonathan Harvey, Rowan and Tillman's battery commander.

The challenge when a key leader gets switched out is to maintain the existing relationships.

"You have to be very delicate in the hand over," said Harvey, of Nebraska City, Neb. "Iraqi culture is big on trust."

Harvey said he made sure Tillman had plenty of time to shadow Rowan and meet one on one with all his Iraqi counterparts.

"Back in the states, a change of command is nothing more than an inventory. Here, it's a much more deliberate process," Harvey said. "(For Tillman and Rowan) we took 11 days, and each day had a different leader engagement."

Despite the introductions and the crash course he received on Adhamiyah's kaleidoscopic array of political and religious groups and their rivalries, Tillman said he still has a lot to learn. I

t will take time to build up the kind of personal relationships that Rowan had, where he knew not just someone's name, but their wife and son's name and what brand of cigarette they smoked, too.

"I know the area. As far as terrain, how to operate, tactics - I know all that," Tillman said. "What I need to learn is who I can trust."



(Photo by Sgt. Mike Pryor, 2nd BCT, 82nd Abn. Div. Public Affairs)

Are You Still Breathing?

Sgt. 1st Class Eduardo Atienza, of Fayetteville, N.C., the medical platoon sergeant for 2nd Battalion, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment, demonstrates how to evaluate a casualty during combat lifesaver training for soldiers from the Iraqi Army's 3rd Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 6th Division May 20.



(Photo by Sgt. Mike Pryor, 2nd BCT, 82nd Abn. Div. Public Affairs)

That's a Fine Mess

Staff Sgt. Robert Scott, of Cambridge, N.Y., a combat engineer with Company A, 325th Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, guides a bucket loader during an operation to remove trash blocking access to a pedestrian footbridge and a health clinic in the Tunis neighborhood of Baghdad May 21.

Iraqis Taking the Lead at Al Suleikh Joint Security Station

By Sgt. Mike Pryor
2nd BCT, 82nd Abn. Div. Public Affairs

BAGHDAD – Capt. James Peay was starting to feel like a third wheel.

Peay, a battery commander with the 82nd Airborne Division from Nashville, Tenn., was accompanying Iraqi police chief Lt. Col. Ahmed Abdullah on a combined engagement patrol through the east Baghdad neighborhood of Suleikh.

Whenever they stopped to speak with people on the street, Ahmed did most of the talking. Peay stood off to the side, listening as his interpreter translated. His comments were mostly limited to hellos, goodbyes, and thank-yous.

This was Ahmed's show, and Peay was more than happy to give him the spotlight. It's not that he is shy, Peay said later, it's that, ultimately, stability in Iraq depends on the Iraqi Security Forces – and people like Lt. Col. Ahmed – taking the lead.

Successfully negotiating that difficult transition has become one of the major focuses of the entire war effort, especially since the kick-off of the new security plan for Baghdad, which has placed thousands of additional U.S. and Iraqi forces in Baghdad communities, often living together in the same compounds.

Peay commands one of those new shared bases – the Suleikh Joint Security Station. For more than three months, paratroopers from the 82nd Airborne Division have been living and working side-by-side with the Iraqi Police and Iraqi Army at the JSS to coordinate security efforts in Suleikh.

The paratroopers from Battery A, 2nd Battalion, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment, man the JSS 24 hours a day. They have a cramped section of the building to themselves, stacked high with boxes of canned food, water and other supplies.

The police stay on the other side of the same building, and the Iraqi soldiers stay in another part of the complex. At



(Photo by Sgt. Mike Pryor, 2nd BCT, 82nd Abn. Div. Public Affairs)

1st Lt. Larry Rubal (kneeling), of Old Forge, Pa., a platoon leader with Battery A, 2nd Battalion, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment, watches as Lt. Col. Ahmed Abdullah, the local police commander, talks to an Iraqi woman during a joint patrol May 18.

least once a day, liaisons from the three units meet in the conference room to discuss operations.

When the JSS was first established, the area was so dangerous that the police rarely left the station. Some days, they went out only to pick up one of the dead bodies regularly dumped in the neighborhood.

Three months later, things have changed. The U.S. presence helped bring the level of violence down significantly. At the same time, it emboldened the ISF to raise their profile in the area – particularly the police.

"They know we're here to support them, but at the same time, they're getting to a point where they know security as a whole is in their hands," said 2nd Lt. Jesse Bowman, an Alpha Battery platoon leader from Reynoldsburg, Ohio.

The difficult part, now, will be to maintain the security

while the U.S. forces step back and the ISF step up. Peay's patrol with Ahmed May 18, his first as the new battery commander, gave an encouraging glimpse of the future.

Before the patrol started, platoon sergeant Sgt. 1st Class Michael Nichols, of Lewisburgh, W.V., went over tactics and procedures with the Iraqis. When he was satisfied everyone was on the same page, the patrol moved out.

With a phalanx of police and paratroopers around them, Peay and Ahmed spent several hours walking a loop of the neighborhood around the JSS. They talked to people in their houses, outside washing their cars, on their way to work or anywhere else they found them.

Almost everyone complained about sewage or electricity, which, in the big scheme of things, Peay found promising.

"If they're complaining about the power, security must be pretty good," he said.

Sometimes people came right out of their gates to talk with Ahmed in the middle of the street, an act that newly-arrived platoon leader 1st Lt. Larry Rubal, from Old Forge, Pa., found incredible. At his old unit, people were afraid to be seen talking to U.S. or Iraqi Security Forces.

Peay rarely had to ask a question. Ahmed was running the show. At one point Rubal asked his interpreter to make sure a man they were talking to received a pamphlet with the number of a crime tip line. The man produced one from his pocket. Ahmed had already given it to him.

"He really took the lead and got out there," Peay said afterwards.

Peay said he'd like to build on the day's success by conducting more joint patrols and joint operations. And whenever possible, he'll continue to keep the U.S. in the background.

"I'd rather our guys just stand outside and have (the ISF) do everything," he said.

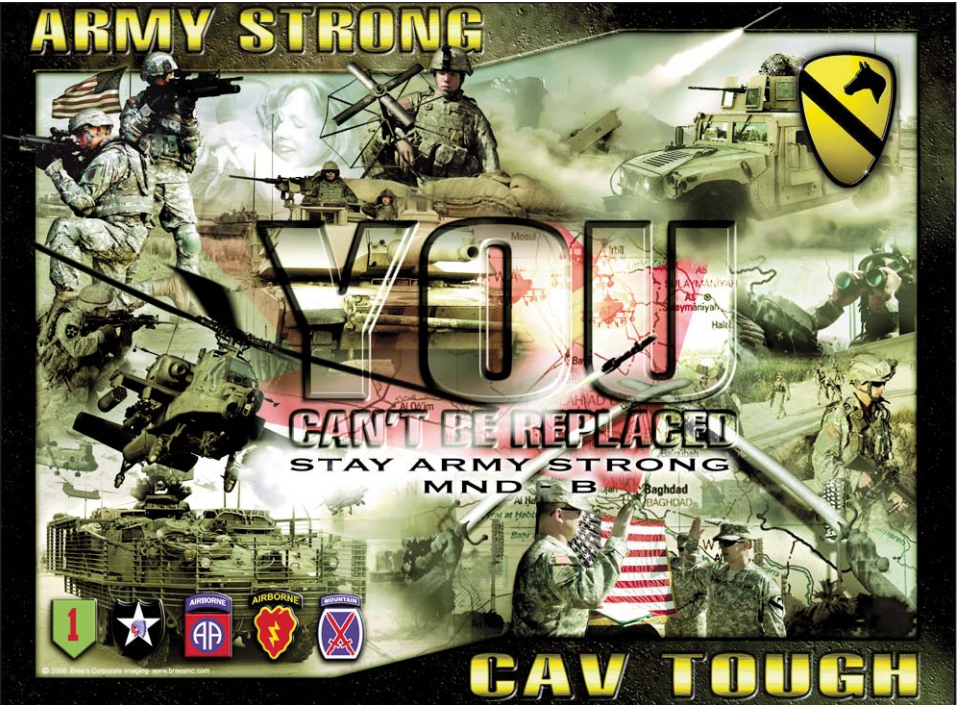
In the meantime, Peay has another patrol scheduled with Lt. Col. Ahmed. And as the ISF continue to make gains in securing the streets of Baghdad, it looks like Peay will have to get used to being the third wheel.



(Photo by Spc. Alexis Harrison, 2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Celebrating Heritage

Soldiers from the 1st Fijian Infantry Regiment, put on a show in celebration of Asian/Pacific Islander Month at the Forward Operating Base Prosperity in central Baghdad May 26. They performed traditional dances at the Black Jack Bistro.





(Photo by Sgt. Robert Strain, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Staff Sgt. Ronald Rora (right, on the screen), watches as his son Domonique prepares to walk across the stage and receive his high school diploma May 27 at the Bell County Exposition Center in Belton, Texas.

Graduation Brings Family Together

**By Sgt. Robert Strain
1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs**

BELTON, Texas – For many parents, there is a list of events in their child's life that are not to be missed. Things like their first steps, their first day of school and their high school graduation top that list.

However, sometimes things like deployment may cause military parents to miss some of those events.

Thanks to modern technology, some Soldiers of the 1st Cavalry Division currently deployed to Iraq, graduation is one major event they didn't have to miss.

The First Team and the Killeen Independent School District teamed up to bring families together during this year's high school graduations by broadcasting the ceremonies via video teleconference to forward operating bases in Iraq. The broadcast gave the graduate and their families the opportunity to talk before the ceremony, and the parent in Iraq the ability to watch the ceremony live.

With parents in Iraq shown on large screens at the Bell County Exposition Center in Belton, Texas, as well as a small TV at the base of the stage, the Soldiers were able to cheer on their son or daughter as if they were right there with all the other parents.

For Domonique Rora, who graduated with honors from Killeen High School May 27, the opportunity to talk to his dad, Staff Sgt. Ronald Rora, a medic with the 1st Cavalry Division in Baghdad, made the fact that he wasn't home a little easier to bear.

"I'm really excited about it, and it makes it a little bit easier," he said.

Many Soldiers tried to schedule their rest and recuperation leave so that they would be home during their child's graduation, but not all of the parents were able to make it home.

Rora explained that his father had planned to take his leave during graduation, but when a family emergency brought him home earlier than expected, he wasn't able to take leave again for the graduation.

This is his father's second deployment, but just because it's happened before doesn't make it any easier.

Rora explained that it is harder this time around, with his dad unable to be here for the graduation and when he has to go off to college.

Rora said he has big plans for the summer, including moving to Florida the day after graduation and starting college in July. He plans to major in biochemistry and pre-med at the University of Florida, even though his father is a Florida State fan.

All in all, Rora was very glad to have the opportunity to have his father at his graduation, even if he wasn't there physically.

"It was very moving, very touching," Rora said, knowing that his father was watching him walk across the stage and receive his diploma.



(Photo by Sgt. Nicole Kojetin, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Staff Sgt. Ronald Rora, from Jacksonville, Fla., smiles as he talks to his family via video teleconference from Camp Liberty, Iraq May 27. The medic from Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, was able to watch his son, Domonique, graduate from Killeen High School at the Bell County Exposition Center in Belton, Texas, live.

Live-Broadcast of Graduation Brings Smiles Across Miles

**By Sgt. Nicole Kojetin
1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs**

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – His eyes searched the sea of jewel-colored robes for his son just like any other father would do on graduation day, but instead of doing it from the stands surrounded by his family, he was sitting in a conference room in the Multi-National Division – Baghdad headquarters building here watching the ceremony on a television.

Prior to the Killeen High School's graduation ceremony May 27, Staff Sgt. Ronald Rora had laughed outside talking about how he was worried this day would never come, joking with the other fathers about what he was going to convert his newly-graduated son's room into.

But eventually, the truth came out.

"I am totally proud of him," he said after talking to his family via video teleconference. "He's been a 'brainiac' throughout school. He has always done really well in school. He worked really hard to get this far."

Domonique Rora was enrolled in a college "prep" program at Killeen High School and spent many nights staying up doing homework until 1 or 2 o'clock in the morning.

The hard work was obvious when he walked across the stage with his smile beaming as the announcer read off the scholarships he earned for college.

Thousands of miles away, his dad was smiling just as big as he waved into the camera hoping that his son could see him.

Rora's family is used to him being gone by now. His first tour to Iraq ended just six months prior to coming over for this deployment.

"If we are extended, that means I will have

spent three Thanksgivings, three Christmas's and three New Year's in a row over here," said Rora, who is a medic for Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division. "It's hard, but I think it is harder on them."

He tries to call every other day to let his family know that he is OK. While his family may be used to absence, that doesn't necessarily make it any easier. Big milestones such as this graduation day remind the 16-year Army veteran how much he misses his family.

"I really wish that I was able to spend more time with him through the years. That is my regret," said the Jacksonville, Fla. native.

In his many military absences, his wife, Denise, has been holding down the fort at home. As he watched his son cross the stage he knew, much of the credit goes to her.

"When kids are little they just deal with (the moves and the military life). They are just resilient and bounce back so easily," he said. "When they get older, they start to act out. She has been the one that has to deal with that the most."

Though he already knew that she was doing a great job, watching his son graduate confirmed it.

"She's done the bulk of the work," he said. "I would just come in every once in a while."

In two years, his second son, Bryant, will be graduating from high school and Rora hopes that he will be able to be there in person.

"I really wanted to be there for this one," Rora said. "I am glad I (was) able to watch it, though. Hopefully, I will be there for the next one."

Domonique is leaving for college on a full scholarship to the University of Florida. Rora plans on being retired, and in the audience in person, by the time Domonique graduates again.



Never Forget

Soldiers with the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division lay U.S. flags at the base of a wreath to honor their fallen comrades during a Memorial Day service at Forward Operating Base Union III in Baghdad May 28.

(Photo by Sgt. Robert Yde, 2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Apache Battalion Honors Fallen Heroes in Iraq

By Spc. Nathan Hoskins
1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – Soldiers from the 1st Air Cavalry “Warrior” Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, honored the sacrifices of heroes, both past and present, during a Memorial Day ceremony May 28.

The troopers from the 4th “Guns” Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, gathered together at their headquarters to commemorate the service members who bravely served before them, said Ballston Spa, N.Y., native 1st Sgt. J.D. Sellers, the acting command sergeant major for 4-227th.

“It’s a time to remember and celebrate the sacrifices our heroes have made before us, what they dedicated their lives to and what they chose to represent for the nation. They made the ultimate sacrifice for us,” he said.

The Soldiers also took time to learn the history of Memorial Day, its origin dating back to the year 1866, but first officially observed May 30, 1868.

The Guns Battalion then reflected on the sacrifices that their pilots made January 28, 2007, said Orlando, Fla., native Lt. Col. Timothy DeVito, the battalion commander.

“Especially today, in this battalion, we remember the heroes closest to us – Mister Chow and Captain Resh. We (also) remem-



(Photo by Spc. Nathan Hoskins, 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Orlando, Fla., native Lt. Col. Timothy DeVito, commander of 4th “Guns” Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, addresses his Soldiers during a Memorial Day ceremony May 28 at Camp Taji, Iraq. He reminded his troops to remember not only those who have served before them, but those heroes who lost their lives during this war.

ber their families and friends who knew them and loved them best,” he said.

Capt. Mark Resh and Chief Warrant

Officer 3 Cornell Chao, both AH-64D Apache attack helicopter pilots, perished in battle January 28, 2007, while protecting

their wingman in An Najaf.

“We just use this as an opportunity to reflect on their sacrifice and honor their memory by continuing to serve as they served and live the Warrior Ethos like they lived it and demonstrated it for us,” DeVito said.

The Guns commander reminded his Soldiers to not only remember those who have served before them, but to never forget those Soldiers who are currently missing in Iraq.

“We remember our Soldiers whose whereabouts are unknown. We will never quit searching, and we will never leave them behind,” he said.

DeVito said he wants his Soldiers to take more from Memorial Day than just a ceremony; he wants them to learn from those whose sacrifices paved the way to the freedoms they enjoy today.

“(Memorial Day) is also for the current generation of Soldiers to reflect upon. (To reflect on) not only what past generations have done, but what our fallen heroes have sacrificed for. Then, to commit ourselves to serving in their memory – using their example to make us better Soldiers,” he said.

The ceremony ended with a moment of silence for their comrades who have fallen in battle and those service members who fell in battle before them.



Spc. Juan Caballero, a South Bend, Ind., native with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, and members of his firing squad, practice their techniques and drills before the “Dagger” Brigade Memorial Day ceremony at Camp Liberty, Iraq. Cabellero, who has family members serving in the military, volunteered to be a part of the ceremony to honor those who have fallen, both past and present.



(Photos by Pfc. Benjamin Gable, 7th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)

Command Sgt. Maj. John Fortune, the senior noncommissioned officer for the 2nd “Dagger” Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, and his commander, Col. J.B. Burton, place a wreath at the foot of the memorial during the Dagger Brigade Memorial Day ceremony May 28 at Camp Liberty, Iraq. The memorial was constructed and painted by a Dagger Brigade Soldier in remembrance of those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice in the service the nation. Burton remarked how important it was for everyone, both in Iraq and back home, to take time to remember those who have fallen defending our freedoms and beliefs.

21 Guns Recall 61 Lives

Dagger Brigade Remembers Their Fallen at Service

By Capt. David Levasseur
2nd BCT, 1st Inf. Div. Public Affairs Officer

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – Twenty-one shots rang clearly through the warm interior of the chapel. The shots were immediately followed by the long, somber notes of ‘Taps,’ which marked a solemn end to the ceremony memorializing the 61 Soldiers and one interpreter from the 14 task force formations associated with the 2nd “Dagger” Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division who have died during Operation Iraqi Freedom 06-08.

“Today, we pause along with all Americans for a moment to honor our fallen, whose personal investment in their nation’s freedom allow our citizens to realize the ideals that define what it means to be an American,” said Colonel J.B. Burton, commander of the Dagger Brigade. “These fallen Warriors represent us all. They represent the very few of our great nation who have stood up and stepped forward to defend our Nation against all enemies, at any cost,” he continued.

Burton stood beside a gleaming white, three piece wall inscribed in stark black block lettering with the names of the 61 Soldiers and one interpreter who were killed in action while assigned or attached to the Dagger brigade since



Maj. Tom Valadez (right), with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, and a 10-year Army veteran, sings with other members of the “Dagger Quartet” during the Dagger Brigade Memorial Day ceremony May 28 at Camp Liberty, Iraq.

September 2006. The wall, which now stands guard to the entrance to the brigade headquarters building here, is a duplicate of the one being constructed in Schweinfurt, Germany the Dagger Brigade’s home station. The Dagger Brigade

Combat Team deployed one battalion task force in August 2006 and followed with the remainder of the brigade in September last year. The headquarters of the nearly 5,000-Soldier BCT is currently responsible for northwestern Baghdad.

The Dagger Brigade was deployed in the Salah ah Din region of Iraq, 60 miles north of Baghdad in 2004 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom II.

During his remarks Burton reminded his listeners, “...Let us remember that our mission here is vital. It is for keeps and we – our nation’s warriors collectively hold the line – out front, and far away to protect our families, our future, and what we – as Americans – believe in.”

After a roll call of the fallen members of the brigade, Burton and his senior noncommissioned officer, Command Sgt. Maj. John Fortune, laid a wreath at the base of the wall and stood stiffly at attention as an honor guard fired the 21-gun salute into the morning sky.

The commander’s final message still hung in the air, “...Let us give thanks. Thanks that our nation produces patriots such as these. Let us pray for their families and friends, and let us ask only that the souls of these Soldiers be welcomed as heroes and posted in over watch of us all, as we continue our mission here.”



(Photo by Spc. William Grove, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Spc. Patrick Pollas, 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, is presented with a Purple Heart by Brig. Gen. William F. Grimsley, the 4th Infantry Division's deputy commanding general, during a ceremony held May 22 at the Fort Hood Catering and Conference Center. Pollas was one of nine Soldiers presented with the Purple Heart during the ceremony.

Wounded Warriors, Volunteers Honored

By Sgt. Cheryl Cox
1st Cavalry Division Public Affairs

FORT HOOD, Texas – The 1st Cavalry Division leadership recognized Soldiers who have come home from Iraq due to injuries and First Team volunteers who have made a difference in the lives of the Soldiers at the Fort Hood Catering and Conference Center here May 22.

“Self-sacrifice is the real miracle from which all other miracles grow,” said Col. Larry Phelps, the 1st Cavalry Division (rear) commander, during his opening remarks for the ceremony. “Self-sacrifice doesn’t wait to be asked. It is an honor to be here to honor these American originals today.”

In attendance for the ceremony was Brig. Gen. John Campbell, the deputy commanding general for maneuver for Multi-National Division – Baghdad and the 1st Cav. Div., and Brig. Gen. William F. Grimsley, the deputy commanding general for the 4th Infantry Division, as well as many First Team Soldiers, Family Members and Fort Hood community members.

“I am honored everyday to stand in formation with American, and today is no exception,” said Grimsley, addressing the audience after awarding nine Purple Hearts.

Along with the Purple Heart recipients, volunteers throughout the division were recognized for their selfless service to their units, families and communities.

“The volunteers this month are being thanked for their many hours of service to others,” said Wendy Fil, wife of the division commanding general, Maj. Gen. Joseph F. Fil Jr. “It is people like you who make the Army an Army Family.”

As Grimsley addressed those in attendance, he explained the importance of the day’s ceremony.

“We have no shortage of the number of people who call themselves heroes,” said Grimsley. “But these Soldiers sitting in front of you are true heroes. They are an immediate and ready reminder of what makes our Army great. They do what they do with little fanfare, and they do it well.”

As Grimsley closed his portion of the ceremony, he expressed his emotions about the Purple Heart recipients.

“No amount of medals or money will compensate for the sacrifices these Soldiers make,” he said. “Our job is to ensure that the gift of freedom that these Soldiers fight for isn’t squandered or taken for granted. These Soldiers, honored here today, have given us a tremendous legacy to live to forever.”



(Photo by Spc. William Grove, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Turkey Hunt

Soldiers from Company A, 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry Regiment, enjoyed a three-day hunt May 9 -11 on the central Texas Crenwelge Ranch, a 648 square-acre hunting ranch. Although the hunt did not produce any turkeys, it brought first-time turkey hunters as well as 15-year veterans’ of turkey hunting together for sport and fun. Among those participating in the hunt were six Soldiers in the ‘Wounded Warrior’ program, back in Texas recovering from their injuries. The hunt was free of charge for the wounded troops, a gift from the owner of the ranch, Donna Crenwelge, to say, “Thank you” to the Soldiers.

Town Hall Forum: the Place for Answers

By Pfc. Tiffany Andrews
13th Public Affairs Detachment

FORT HOOD, Texas – A town hall meeting was held at the Fort Hood Catering and Conference Center May 16 to inform the 1st Cavalry Division Soldiers’ families and friends how they’re loved ones are doing while deployed to Iraq.

Col. John Ballantyne, the 1st Cavalry Division chief of staff, who is currently deployed to Iraq, was present via satellite for a conference with Col. Larry Phelps, the 1st Cavalry Division commander (rear), who gave the audience a chance to many of the questions they have about their Soldiers.

“Each Soldier has a small victory each day, whether it’s seeing the smile on a child’s face, watching a mother receive medical care for her baby, a shop-keeper without fear; every day it’s something,” Ballantyne said in answer to a question about if the mission has been successful.

A variety of questions were asked throughout the meeting that helped the families feel more confident about their loved ones and their continuing assignment in Iraq, including the extension in deployments.

“While we all would much rather be with our families and friends, we’re prepared to do what’s expected of us,” Ballantyne said in response.

Some closing thoughts that the chief of staff wanted the families to know were to stay informed; be involved with the rear detachment activities and the



(Photo by Pfc. Tiffany Andrews, 13th Public Affairs Detachment)

Col. Larry Phelps, the 1st Cavalry Division commander (rear), addressed issues of importance to the audience at a town hall meeting May 16 at the Catering and Conference Center at Fort Hood, Texas.

family readiness groups; and to keep the faith, saying they are all in this together and they will get through this together.

Phelps added to this, telling the families to utilize the assets that this installation offers, including the Morale, Welfare and Recreational (MWR) programs, the gyms and the other facilities available.

While closing the meeting, Phelps encouraged the assembly to bring somebody new to the next town hall meeting, and to always keep informed, keep in touch and keep the faith.



(Photo by Spc. Alexis Harrison, 2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

“Big Dog Daddy Tour” Stops in Iraq

Country star Toby Keith signs a guitar for Staff Sgt. Jose Trevino of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, during his visit to Forward Operating Base Prosperity, Iraq, May 22. Keith also stopped at the Multi-National Division-Baghdad headquarters at Camp Liberty, Iraq, during his “Big Dog Daddy Tour.” Keith took time to thank Soldiers for their service before performing a concert at Victory Base, an adjacent camp to Liberty.

Toes Tap to Value Heavy Kid’s Flick

In human culture, dancing has always been a language of love. Wrapping your arms around each other and swaying to the music on the dance floor is standard. In fact, many of us learned how to dance in elementary school. Of course back then, cooties were raging and no self-respecting boy wanted to hold hands with a girl.

Random Reviews

Sgt. Nicole Kojetin



Apparently, penguins have a different love language. Singing. In fact these “heart songs” are how the females choose their mate, at least that is according to the Warner Brothers’ movie “Happy Feet.”

Our main character, Mumble (voiced by Elijah Wood), is the odd man out. During the long winter, when he was still in the egg, his papa, Memphis (voiced by Hugh Jackman), dropped him into the cold, arctic snow of the South Pole. This is a huge, often fatal mistake for a daddy to make. Because of this, Mumble was a slow developer and couldn’t find his voice. He could, however, dance up a storm. To the elder’s disgust, he tap dances every time he’s happy.

We can’t help but love Mumble. He is fuzzy and cute the entire movie. Even when all the other penguins of his class had lost their baby feathers Mumble still had his from the neck up, but he is a grown up inside and is more than willing to prove it.

It seems that these penguins are heading for disaster. The aliens (also known as humans) have moved to Antarctica and are scooping up their food supply. Mumble sets out to stop them.

There are a couple themes in this Academy Award and Golden Globe winning movie. The first is about being different. In adolescence, every one wants to be a part of the crowd. When you’re little it almost feels like a sin to be different. This movie shows that being unique does not have to be a bad thing; in fact, you can save your entire species.

The second theme is “watch what you eat.” You would have to be blind to not understand that the writers of “Happy Feet” feet are trying to tell us something. Actually, the only way it could be blunter is if Mumble tapped on the inside of the television set and yelled, “Hello! You are eating all of my food!”

The problem is that fishing in the area has reduced the numbers of certain species down to dangerous levels and this movie is a tool to create awareness. The DVD even comes with a wallet-sized guide to what fish eat and what to avoid in order to preserve the ocean’s balance.

This movie was fun to watch – a little silly, a bunch of music and lots of big names voiced the characters (Nicole Kidman, Robin Williams and Steve Irvin, to name a few).

It is a good one for all ages.

(Four out of five stars!)



(Photo from Warner Bros Pictures)

Fort Hood Troops Enjoy Night of Flag Football

By Sgt. Robert Strain
1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

DALLAS - More than 100 Soldiers and Family Members from the 1st



Soldiers from Fort Hood stand up to be recognized for their service to the country during a charity game of flag football at Dallas' Reunion Arena May 3. Roger Staubach's Team Hardline and Danny White's Team Musers battled to raise money for the Coalition to Support America's Heroes and other charities.

Cavalry Division and other Fort Hood units were treated to a game of arena flag football May 3 at Reunion Arena in Dallas.

The game was between Roger Staubach's "Team Hardline" and Danny White's "Team Musers." Staubach and White are former quarterbacks for the Dallas Cowboys, and the proceeds raised through ticket sales and donations benefited the Coalition to Support America's Heroes, and other charities that support Soldiers and other members of the armed forces.

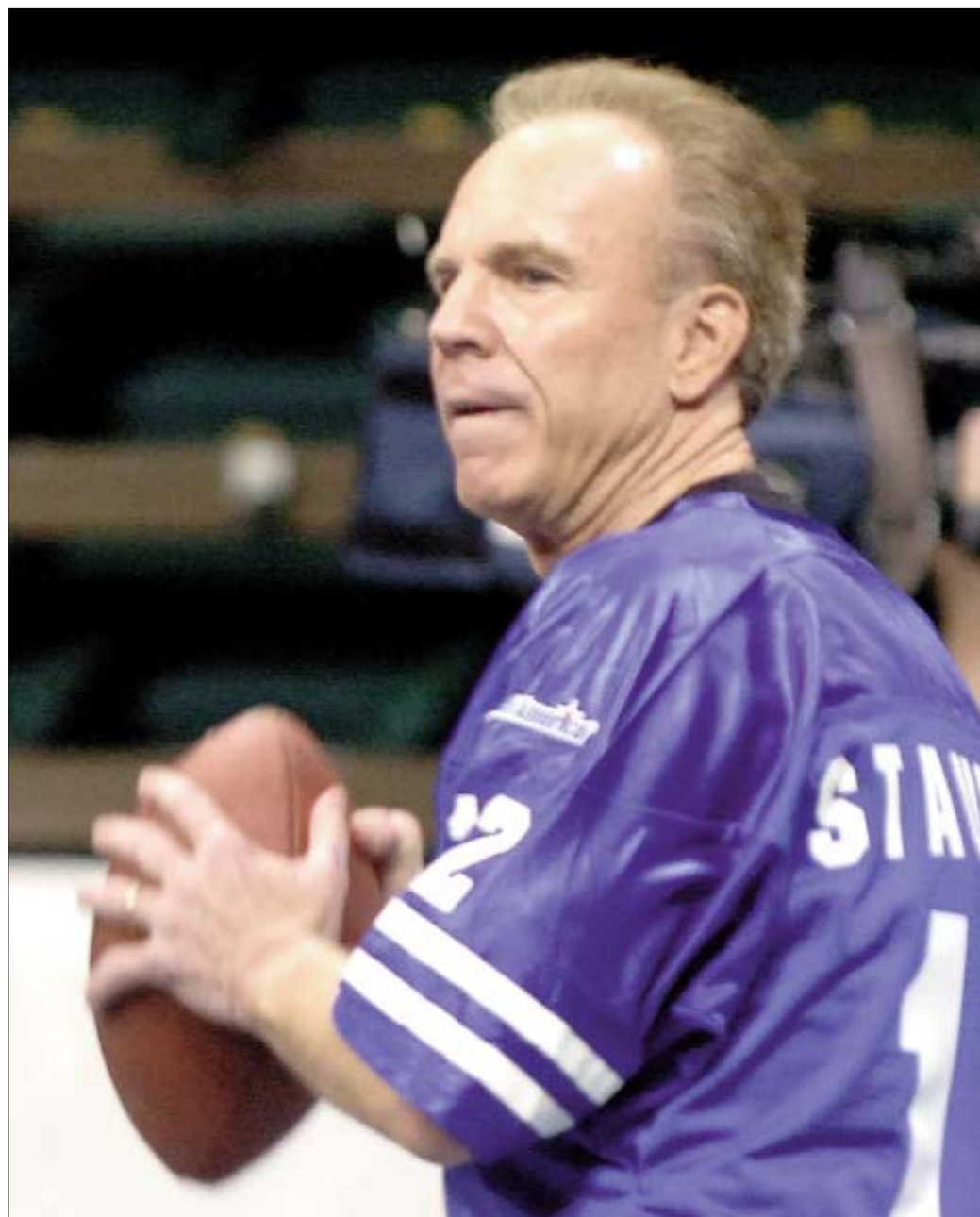
The two teams were comprised of several former NFL players, local radio personalities and listeners, and a few Soldiers, airmen and Marines who have been injured in Iraq or Afghanistan.

For some of the First Team Soldiers in attendance, the game was a chance to see some of their sports heroes in action.

"I never imagined I'd see Roger Staubach in person," said Pfc. Christopher Gallegos, a cavalry scout with the 6th Battalion, 9th Cavalry Regiment of the 1st Cavalry Division's 3rd Brigade Combat Team.

Gallegos, who has been at Fort Hood for about a month, was given the opportunity to attend the game as a "treat" from his unit before deploying to Iraq in the coming weeks.

Gallegos said it was a good way to take his mind off of the mission ahead and just take some time to relax before departing for Iraq



(Photo by Sgt. Robert Strain, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Former Dallas Cowboys quarterback Roger Staubach warms up with a pass May 3 before facing Danny White's Team Musers in a game of flag football at Reunion Arena in Dallas. Proceeds from the game went to charities that support Soldiers.

Kobe Bryant: Basketball's Best or Ball Hog Bust?

Kobe Bryant's career is over.

Sure, he will continue to rack up stats that will help him go down as one of the greatest players of all time. But, he is stuck in Los Angeles with the Lakers and a mediocre team, at best.

After the week of frustration in which he demanded a trade, then recanted, he brought to light the frustrations of knowing he lost his best chances of winning another title when "the Diesel" left town.

We all know Kobe wants to go down as the greatest player of all time. He has said so himself.

He has three championship rings and is still only 28 years old.

He still has five or six of his best years left in the tank. But scoring titles alone won't put him in the pantheon with greats such as Michael Jordan, Bill Russell, Shaquille O'Neal, or even Tim Duncan.

O'Neal has four titles now. Duncan is about a month away from claiming his fourth.

We all know what Jordan and Russell did. Kobe, on the other hand, will have to settle with his three rings.

Not too long ago, the Lakers were a

Trigger Pull

Pfc. Benjamin Gable



dynasty.

They had won three straight titles. Even though they lost what would have been their fourth straight championship to the Detroit Pistons, they still had the best nucleus in the National Basketball Association.

As long as you have the best all-around player in the league, Kobe, and the most dominant big man to ever play the game, Shaq, you have a championship contender.

After losing to the Pistons, though, Bryant did whatever he could to push O'Neal out of the door.

Kobe wanted his own team and wanted to win a championship on his terms. He didn't want to be anyone's sidekick.

He wanted to take a team of role players and win a championship with them. Kind of like a certain player did in the '90s; six times.

What Kobe didn't realize is that O'Neal was his best shot at winning another title.

Of course, O'Neal went on to win last year's title with the Miami Heat, and will have a shot to make a run next year also. O'Neal still has a couple of good years left in him and knows how to pace himself for a playoff run.

His skills have diminished over the last few years, but he is still the best center in the league, by far.

So instead of having O'Neal anchoring the Lakers, Kobe has to deal with overrated players like Lamar Odom, Smush Parker and Chris Mihm.

The trade that sent O'Neal to Miami has already gone down as one of the worst of all time. The Lakers got no real talent in return.

Kobe is now at a crucial point in his career.

The Lakers have a little room to go after free agents, but playing in the dominating Western Conference demands more than having a couple of good players on a team.

To get past teams like the Utah Jazz, Phoenix Suns and San Antonio Spurs, you have to have depth, and veterans who know how to win. Kobe is stuck on a team with

players who have never been truly playoff tested.

There is no way he can win with his current team.

Even if they pull a blockbuster trade and land Jason Kidd, Kevin Garnett, or Jermaine O'Neal, it still won't be enough to put them over the top.

The Lakers will have to make every move they can to bring the players needed to make a run at a championship. While L.A. is an attractive place for free agents to sign, whoever decides to will have to be Kobe's sidekick.

There aren't too many big-time free agents out there who want that. Kobe will just have to wait it out until his contract runs out, and then bolt for a legitimate contender.

Kobe is every bit as talented as Jordan. But, Jordan made his teammates better. At best, Kobe will win one more championship, which will put him two behind Jordan on the list.

So, for now, Jordan still remains the greatest player of all time.

Kobe, on the other hand, will look back and wonder what could have been.